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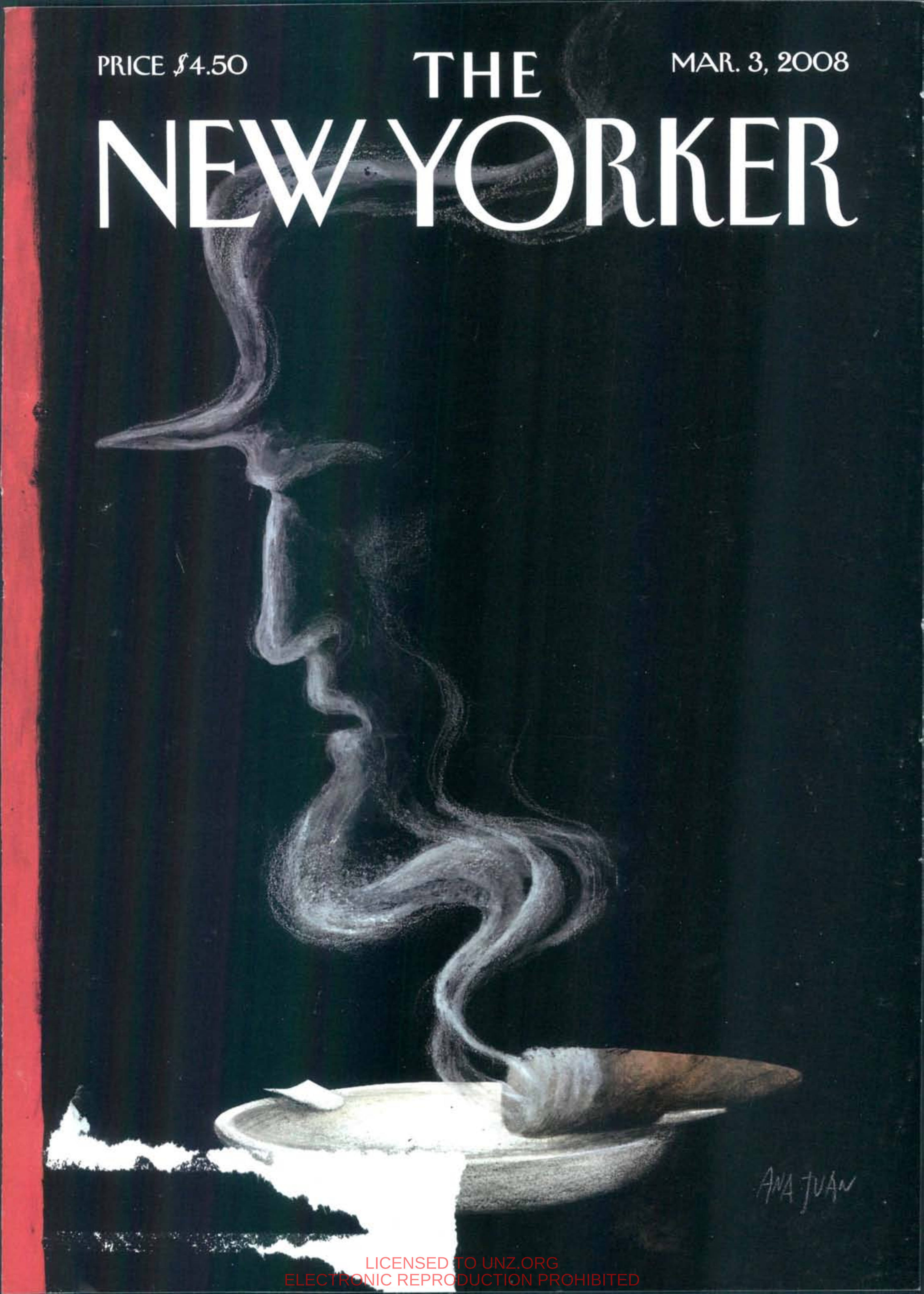

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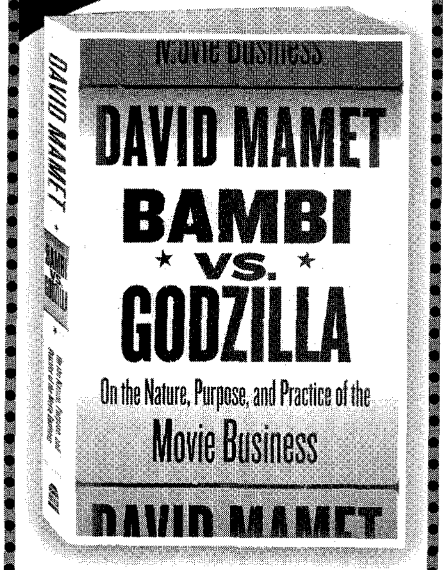

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THE NEW YORKER

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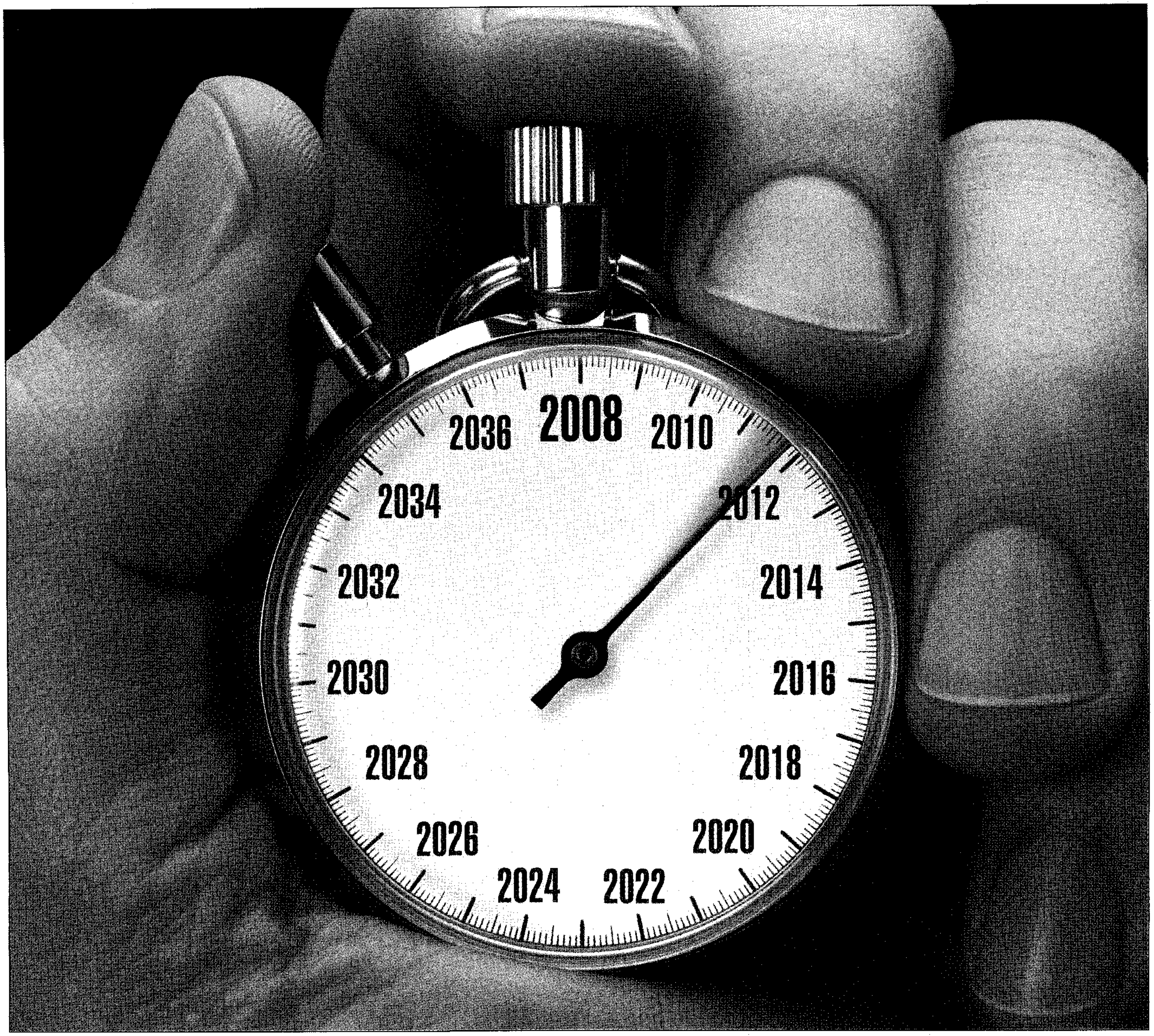

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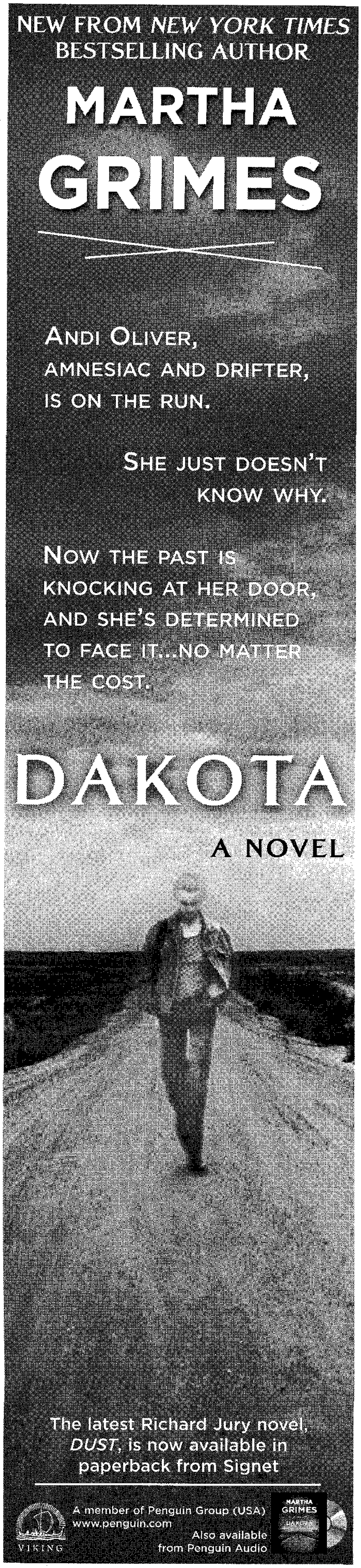

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CONTRIBUTORS

Calvin Trillin ("The Color of Blood," p. 30) has been writing for the magazine since 1963. His latest book is "About Alice."

Alma Guillermoprieto (Comment, p. 25) has written four books about Latin America, including "Dancing with Cuba: A Memoir of the Revolution."

Jack Handey (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 41) will publish "What I'd Say to the Martians," a collection of humor pieces, in April.

Jim Holt ("Numbers Guy," p. 42) is the author of "Stop Me If You've Heard This: A History and Philosophy of Jokes," which comes out in July.

Ana Juan (Cover) has illustrated several children's books, including "The Night Eater," for which she received an Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator Award.

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Kate Julian (The Talk of the Town, p. 26) is the magazine's managing editor.

Margaret Talbot ("The Lost Children," p. 58) is a staff writer and a Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation.

W. S. Merwin (Poems, pp. 34, 62, 80), a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, has published more than twenty books of poetry, including "Migration," which won a National Book Award. "Shadow of Sirius," a new collection, is due out in October.

Honor Moore ("The Bishop's Daughter," p. 48) is the author of three poetry collections and two books, including "The Bishop's Daughter," a memoir, which will come out in May.

Richard Ford (Fiction, p. 68) has published three collections of short stories and six novels, including "The Lay of the Land."

Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 76) writes a regular popular-music column for the magazine.

James Wood (Books, p. 79) is a staff writer and Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism at Harvard. His new book, "How Fiction Works," comes out in July.

John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 84), the magazine's senior drama critic, is working on a biography of Tennessee Williams.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Blogs: *Hendrik Hertzberg* on the primaries, *Sasha Frere-Jones* on pop music, and Goings On, our culture blog, on the Oscars. / Audio: *Honor Moore* discusses her father's secret life. / *Ryan Lizza* and *Hendrik Hertzberg* on the Campaign Trail podcast. / *Richard Ford* reads a John Cheever story. / Video: *Steve Brodner* draws Hillary Clinton at sea, plus more Naked Campaign videos. / *Michael Maslin* concludes his Cartoonography. / From the archives: *Jon Lee Anderson* on Cuba, *Jervis Anderson* on Bishop Paul Moore, and thousands of movie reviews. / Animated cartoons and the caption contest.

THE MAIL

POLITICAL PASSION

Hendrik Hertzberg writes that passionate supporters of Senator Hillary Clinton are "a little rarer" than those of Senator Barack Obama (The Talk of the Town, February 11th & 18th). But there's a significant portion of the Democratic base—in particular, older women—who are as excited about Clinton as twenty-somethings are about Obama. It's true that Obama might make a transformative President, and I will support him if he's the Democratic candidate. However, Clinton has shown, in her time in the Senate, that she is able to work with Republicans to get legislation passed, and I see no reason to believe that her competence, knowledge, or responsibility would somehow bar her from being a transformative leader as well. The choice that has been set up for Democrats, between change and experience, is a false one. I see in Senator Clinton a chance to have it all, and that's why I support her—passionately.

Rachael Combe
New York City

THE WRITTEN TRUTH

Jill Lepore, in writing on Benjamin Franklin, attempts to rescue him from Poor Richard: to use a historically accurate lens to find the satirist buried in the dogmatist, the sensualist in the prig (A Critic at Large, January 28th). Her essay is clever and warm, as was her subject. But what author ever wished for such a rescue? Lepore's message is clear: we shouldn't be deceived by Franklin's writing as Poor Richard, which is "naught but pretense," but see through it to the man pulling the strings—or setting the type, as it were. There's nothing like scholarly insistence about the difference between what a man said and who he was for enforcing the popular feeling that an author's collected works collectively dissemble, while facts about his life spell out a certain truth. Too bad, when the man is all character, or when a literary formulation of his life is what Franklin rather carefully leaves us, whether as the author of his Autobiography (the "second edition" of his life) or as the author of his own epitaph, a text that Lepore quotes but apparently does not take seriously on its own terms: "The Body of/B. Franklin,/Printer;/Like the Cover of an old Book,/Its Contents torn out,/And stript of its Lettering and Gilding,/Lies here, Food for Worms./But the Work shall not be wholly lost;/For it will, as he believ'd, appear once more,/In a new and more perfect Edition,/Corrected and amended,/By the author."

K. L. Evans
Professor of Literature
University of Redlands
Redlands, Calif.

GIVING BACK

Jerome Groopman's piece on Kathy Giusti and her foundation, which applies business principles to philanthropic work, addresses the ways in which the foundation is trying to find a cure for multiple myeloma ("Buying a Cure," January 28th). My mother was given a diagnosis of the disease in 1998; over the six years that she lived with her illness, the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation offered information and support that we otherwise would not have received. In fighting to get things done, and reporting on these efforts to its members, the M.M.R.F. helps patients feel more in control. Giusti has so much to be proud of, and I am sure she will never fully understand how many lives she has touched. As for her critics, they made me think of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's quote that "well-behaved women seldom make history." Giusti's aggressive tactics may rub some people the wrong way, but her courage and determination are an inspiration for the many people living with multiple myeloma and their families.

Laura Shea Souza
Stow, Mass.

•

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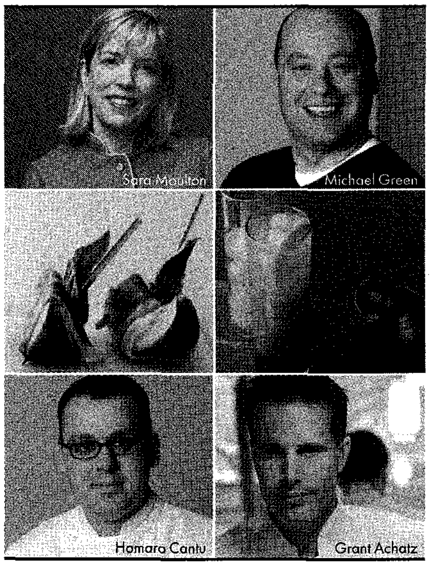

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Sanda Weigl and Orchestra, at Cornelia Street Café. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
COMING UP ROSES

The latest production of the 1959 Jule Styne–Stephen Sondheim musical "Gypsy," which began life last year as an "Encores!" production, boasts an all-star Broadway cast: Laura Benanti, Boyd Gaines, and, as Rose, Patti LuPone. Arthur Laurents, who wrote the book, directs. (See page 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
FAR-OUT VOICES

The Los Angeles-based violinist and vocalist Petra Haden is the daughter of the legendary jazz bassist Charlie Haden, and she shares his unorthodox musicality. She visits the Knitting Factory with her all-female octet, the Sellouts, for a-cappella renditions of songs by The Who, the Beach Boys, Michael Jackson, and other pop icons. (See page 10.)

ART
REBEL WITH A CAUSE

"When I am no longer controversial, I will no longer be important," wrote Gustave Courbet, the nineteenth-century French painter and provocateur, whose rejection of the prevailing artistic conventions paved the way for Impressionism. The Metropolitan Museum gives the artist his first major retrospective in more than thirty years. (See page 11.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LORD OF THE DANCE

Mark Morris's production of Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice" at the Met last spring was a joyful burst of fresh air, and hopes are high that Morris will repeat his success with Purcell's "King Arthur," at City Opera. He will discuss his work at a preview performance in the "Works & Process" series, at the Guggenheim Museum. (See page 14.)

MOVIES
BLUE, WHITE, RED

Both IFC Center and Walter Reade devote their screens to nine days of popular new French films, including "The Heartbeat Detector," starring Mathieu Amalric as a corporate psychologist; "Let's Dance!," a comedy about an aging Holocaust survivor's romantic rebirth; and "Those Who Remain," a love story that focusses on the spouses of patients in a cancer ward. (See pages 21 and 22.)

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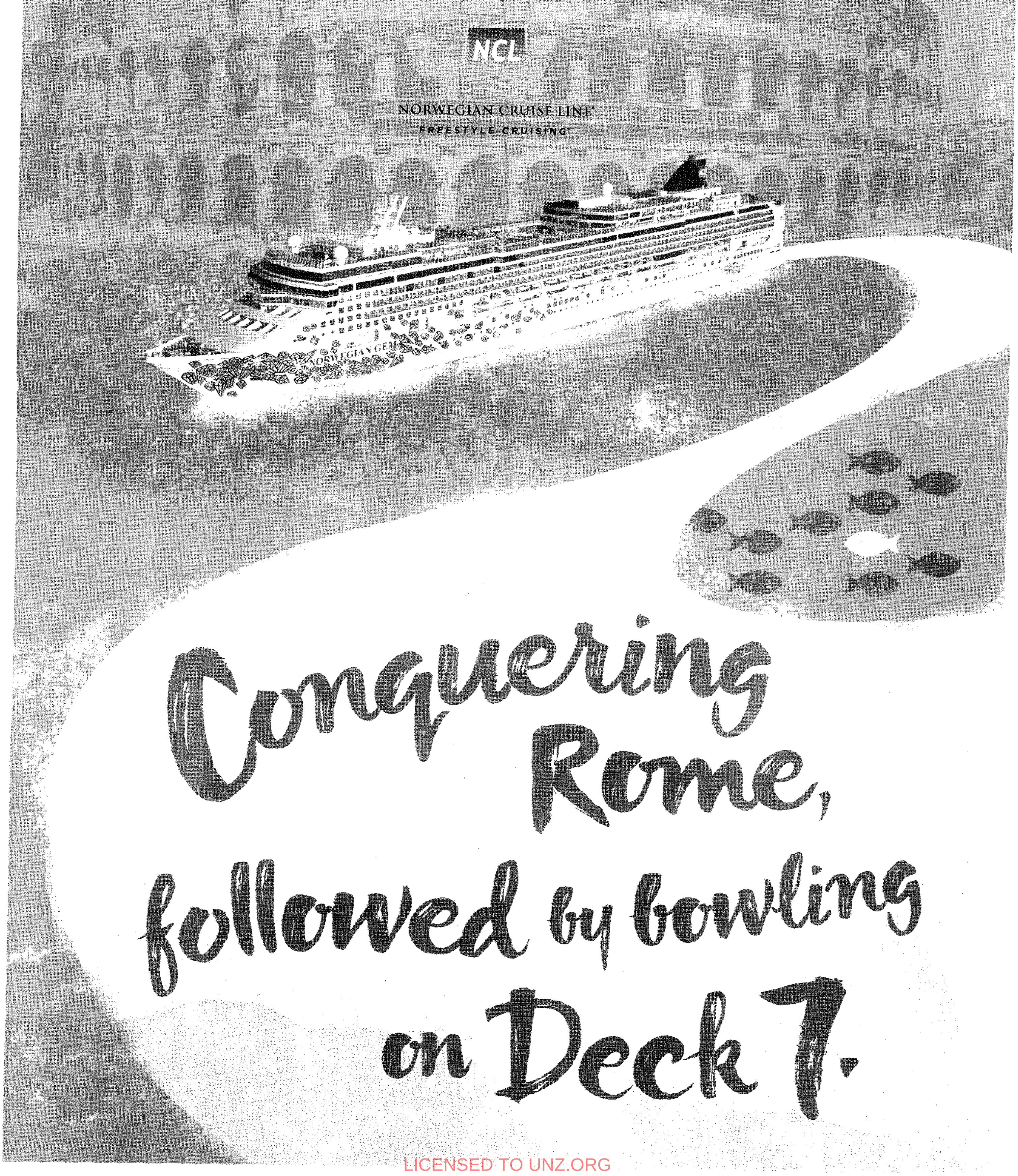
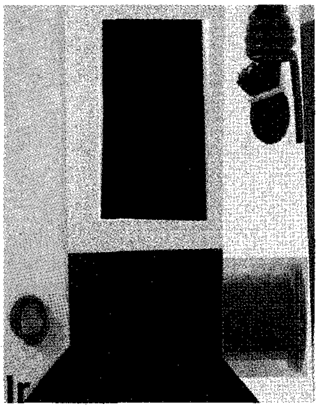

NORWEGIAN GEM
Conquering Rome, followed by bowling on Deck 7.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
STOP MAKING SENSE

The Belgian artist Jan De Cock's installation in the photography galleries at MOMA will confound, even irritate, many viewers. There's no question that it's maddeningly hermetic, but it's also intriguingly beautiful—like a great editorial layout blown up to billboard scale. Two galleries are filled with framed photographs and painted plywood boxes that perch high on the wall or hug the floor, most of them clustered side by side in numbered "modules" whose contents are annotated on wall labels. The information provided can't begin to order, much less explain, the overwhelming pileup of visual information. Although De Cock's primary focus is MOMA itself—its conservation lab, auditorium, library, and collection—the museum is at the center of a storm of images within images, many of which are no more than suggestive slices. The route from Brancusi's sculpture "Mlle Pogany" to Everglades National Park to a woman on a bench in Sayville is full of detours and dead ends, but the trip is as exhilarating as it is exasperating.



—*Vince Aletti*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF
Debbie Allen directs the Tennessee Williams play. Terrence Howard, Anika Noni Rose, James Earl Jones, Phylicia Rashad, and Giancarlo Esposito star. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR
Keen Company presents the world première of a drama by Michael Roland Murphy, about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In previews. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

CONVERSATIONS IN TUSCULUM
The Public presents a new drama about Julius Caesar, written and directed by Richard Nelson. Aidan Quinn, Brian Dennehy, and David Strathairn star. In previews. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

DEAD MAN'S CELL PHONE
The New York première of Sarah Ruhl's play, about a woman who answers the cell phone of a dead man and becomes involved with his family. Starring Mary-Louise Parker, Kathleen Chalfant, and Bill Camp. Anne Bogart directs. In previews. Opens March 4. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE FIFTH COLUMN
The Mint presents the world première of this play by Ernest Hemingway, written in 1937, about a spy in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. Jonathan Bank directs. In previews. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

GHOSTS
At the Pearl, Regge Life directs Henrik Ibsen's play from 1881, in which a woman tries to hide her family's ignominious past from her son. In previews. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

GYPSY
Patti LuPone, Boyd Gaines, and Laura Benanti star in the musical, in a production that originated at New York City Center's "Encores!" series. Arthur Laurents directs. Previews begin March 3. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

IN THE HEIGHTS
The Off Broadway musical, which depicts a microcosm of the Latino community of Washington Heights, moves to Broadway. With music and lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda and a book by Quiara Alegria Hudes. Thomas Kail directs. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

LIBERTY CITY
Jessica Blank and April Yvette Thompson wrote this play, about Thompson's life as the daughter of a Bahamian-Cuban father and an African-American mother in Miami. Thompson plays herself; Blank directs. In previews. Opens March 4. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

PARADISE PARK
Signature Theatre Company presents a new play by Charles Mee, about a fictional amusement park. In previews. Opens March 2. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

PARLOUR SONG
Emily Mortimer, Chris Bauer, and Jonathan Cake star in the world première of Jez Butterworth's drama, about a man who becomes paranoid that his wife is stealing from him. Neil Pepe directs the Atlantic Theatre Company production. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200.)

PASSING STRANGE
The rock musical by Heidi Rodewald and Stew, about a young middle-class black man who finds himself in bohemian Europe, comes to Broadway. In previews. Opens Feb. 28. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

(RUS)H
A drama by James Scruggs, Kristin Marting, and Hal Eagar, in which a man becomes involved with a gay hustler, who is then murdered. Marting directs. Previews begin Feb. 27. Opens March 1. (3LD Art & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-352-3101.)

THE SEAGULL
Dianne Wiest and Alan Cumming star in the Chekhov play, translated by Paul Schmidt. Viacheslav Dolgachev directs. In previews. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

SOUTH PACIFIC
Bartlett Sher directs the first Broadway revival of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical since it opened, in 1949. Starring Kelli O'Hara and Paulo Szot. Previews begin March 1. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

CRIMES OF THE HEART
In Beth Henley's 1981 Pulitzer Prize-winning play, set in Mississippi in 1974, the youngest of the three Magrath sisters, Babe (Lily Rabe), who shot her loutish husband in the stomach, has been released on bail. Lenny (Jennifer Dundas), the oldest, has sent a frantic telegram to their middle sister, Meg (Sarah Paulson), in Los Angeles, pleading with her to come home. Kathleen Turner's direction manages to bring out some of the play's subtler beats and moments, and it's a testament to the veteran actress's skill as a director that the greatest pleasure to be had here is in her casting. The performers so relish their parts that they make you happy about acting as an art. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/25/08.) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

DEATHBED
Mark Schultz's comedic drama attempts to tackle longing, despair, drunkenness, and death, all in the span of an hour. Martha (Christa Scott-Reed) tells her friends and family that she has cancer, while Susan (Emily Donahoe) dumps Martin, her possibly gay boyfriend, and watches her grandfather commit suicide on camera. Unfortunately, in spite of some nuanced performances—especially that of Brandon Miller, as the aching Steven, Martin's best friend—many scenes play at such a brisk pace (some are less than a minute long) that the audience can't form more than cursory connections to the characters. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-352-3101. Through March 1.)

GRACE
Mick Gordon and AC Grayling's drama, a sombre meditation on faith versus reason, centers on Grace (Lynn Redgrave), an atheist professor whose son, Tom (Oscar Isaac), decides that he wants to become a priest, with the noble idea of fomenting "better," i.e. nonviolent, religion. The schematic plot interweaves a barrage of philosophical arguments about the existence of God with the psychological concerns of a stubborn, arrogant woman; perhaps fittingly, the discussions are more inspired than the human drama. The cold gray set lends a sense of dullness, but Philip Goodwin, as Grace's happy-go-lucky husband, brings some much needed vigor and humor, and Redgrave fully embodies the recalcitrant, brittle woman whose beliefs take over her life. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

THE JAZZ AGE
Much is made of dancing in Allan Knee's play, at 59E59, about Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, and Knee, to his credit, uses it not to exploit the mystique of Lost Generation-era Paris but to illustrate the relationships between his subjects. Though the unstable Zelda (Amy Rutberg) is a dominating presence, the play's true focus is the evolution of the friendship between the brilliant, insecure Scott (Dana Watkins) and his younger idol Hemingway (the terrific PJ Sosko). The script wavers between labored and inspired, but Sosko's evocation of Hemingway's grudging affection for his troubled friend makes the play memorable, as does the Hot Club-style jazz played live by a topnotch trio. Directed by Christopher McElroen. (59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through March 2.)

MACBETH
Rupert Goold directs Patrick Stewart as the power-hungry general. (Reviewed in this issue.) (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

LAURIE ROSENWALD

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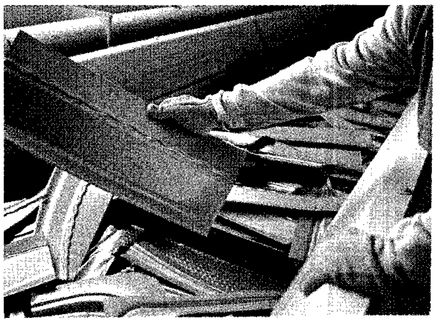
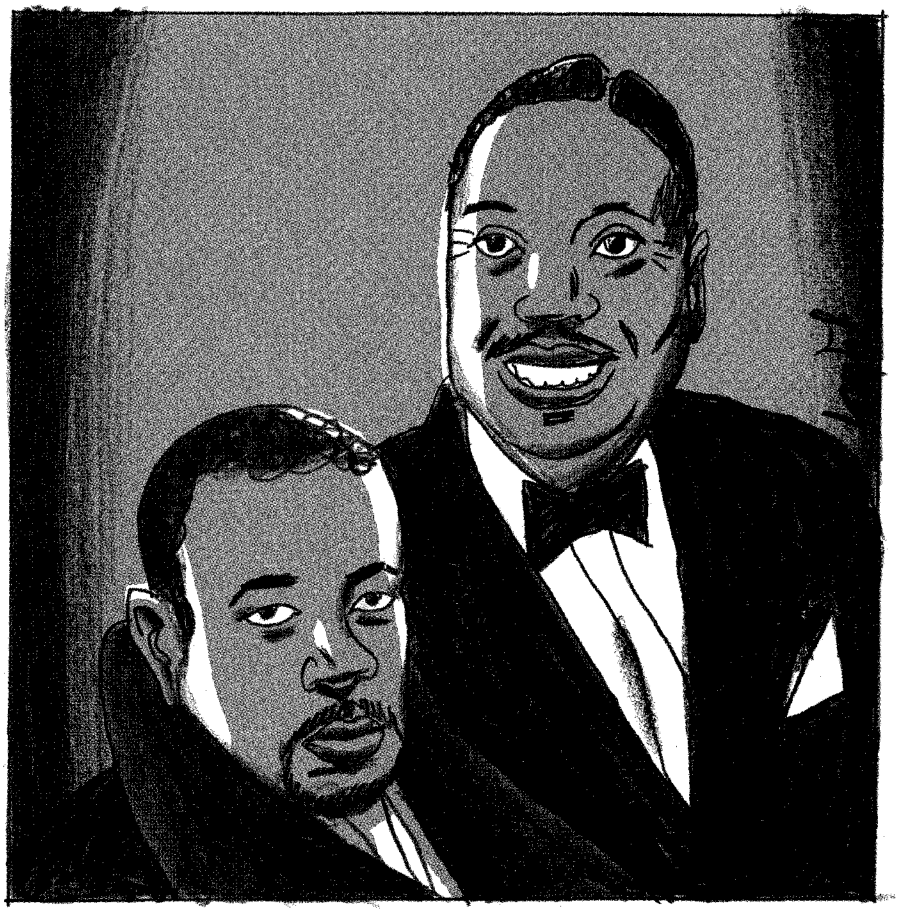


SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE
Roundabout Theatre Company mounts the Stephen Sondheim–James Lapine musical from 1984. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

UNCONDITIONAL
In Brett C. Leonard's drama, directed by Mark Wing-Davey for the LAByrinth Theatre Company, nine New Yorkers are linked by a web of sex, violence, and racial friction. In some ways, the play feels like an indie film: there are punchy, rant-filled scenes set in coffee shops, bars, and bedrooms, and a latticework structure that recalls movies like "Traffic" and "Crash." Unlike them, however, "Unconditional" isn't so forthcoming about its unifying themes, succeeding instead as a subtle, sometimes meandering portrait of urban loneliness. Mark Wendland's perspective-warping set gives the audience, and the characters, a constant sense of obstructed vision. It's an effective metaphor for the barriers we create, and the ones that are created for us. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)



Kevin Mahogany pays tribute to Big Joe Turner, at the Jazz Standard.

JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

Also Playing

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY: Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BETRAYED:** Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. **THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Through March 2. **THE HOMECOMING:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **HUNTING AND GATHERING:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through March 1. **NOVEMBER:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **OROONOKO:** The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. **ROCK 'N' ROLL:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE SEAFARER:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE SLUG BEARERS OF KAYROL ISLAND (OR, THE FRIENDS OF DR. RUSHOWER):** Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Feb. 27: Bedford-Stuyvesant's homegrown a-cappella group the **Persuasions.** Feb. 29: The **Radiators,** a hard-working New Orleans band with a rowdy national following. March 4: **Coco Montoya** picked up the guitar late in life—he was originally a drummer—but he learned to play the blues from the master Albert Collins, and he went on to join John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Feb. 29: The English singer and Kosovo-war veteran **James Blunt** specializes in tender ballads that spill over with declarations of unrequited love.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3132)—Feb. 28: **Petra Haden,** an inspired Los Angeles-based singer and violinist, brings in her all-female octet, the Sellouts, for a-cappella versions of classic pop hits from the sixties and seventies. They'll also be performing originals from her first album, "Imaginaryland," from 1996, and other material. Haden's ingenious all-vocal arrangements of songs such as The Who's "I Can See for Miles" and the Beach Boys' "God Only Knows" reveal how the human voice can so closely match the detailed timbre of a multitude of instruments. Opening the evening will be the "Saturday Night Live" comedian and indie-rock drummer **Fred Armisen.**

MUSIC HALL OF WILLIAMSBURG
66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-486-5400)—Feb. 27: **Pela,** a striving rock band from Brooklyn, cites Hubert Selby, Jr., Raymond Carver, and Andre Dubus among its influences. Those are some pretty highfalutin authors to align yourself with, but the band's members aren't a bunch of bookworms, and their live shows and albums are true to their other heroes, among them Bruce Springsteen, the Replacements, and Wilco. Feb. 29: **Dean & Britta.** Dean Wareham led the whisper-quiet trio Galaxie 500 before starting the popular lo-fi alternative-rock band Luna. Britta Phillips joined him in that latter group a few years before its demise, in 2004. The two stayed together to make more moody music, hushed pop that's augmented with lush instrumentation and sensuality. They're splitting the bill with **Keren Ann,** an Israeli-born singer-songwriter with roots in France and New York, who sings intimate ballads and caresses her acoustic guitar with Continental discretion.

TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—March 4: Apart from last year's instrumental album "The Mix Up," the **Beastie Boys** have been quiet of late. Now the genre-blurring hip-hop pioneers are breaking their silence for a good cause, as they headline a benefit for the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function, a nonprofit agency that supports music therapy and research. The fellow downtown doyen **Moby** is the host.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—March 4: Part of this decade's New York City rock revival, the **Walkmen** distinguished themselves on many fronts: the sweetly abrasive vocals of the lead singer, Hamilton Leithauser; the use of organ and piano; and an urbane, literary-salon aesthetic.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

AMERICAN SONGBOOK
Feb. 29: **Christine Ebersole,** the aura of her Broadway triumph in "Grey Gardens" still iridescent, stops by to display the voice and the stage command that made her a star. She has sure support in the musical director **Billy Stritch.** March 1: In a show that will uncover musical roots that may surprise even her most knowing fans, the punk-rock poetess **Patti Smith** salutes her mother, the singers Chris Connor and June Christy, and other women who influenced her. (Allen Room, Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Feb. 26-March 2: **Michel Legrand,** France's most famous modern romantic composer (he wrote the score for "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" and such piano-bar standards as "Theme from 'The Summer of '42' " and "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?"), has solid jazz credits (check out "Legrand Jazz," from 1958, with Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Bill Evans). Here he's backed by a sterling rhythm section, the bassist **Ron Carter** and the drummer **Lewis Nash.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Feb. 26-March 2: **Ben E. King,** the voice behind "Stand by Me" (by now a national anthem of sorts) and other classics.

CAFÉ CARLYLE
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through March 1: The folk goddess **Judy Collins.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Feb. 26-March 2: **Arturo O'Farrill,** the visionary authority behind the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra, is also an exceptional modern-jazz pianist. He's here with a compact sextet that includes the trumpeter **Jim Seeley** and the drummer **Dafnis Prieto.** It's a good forum for his sly blend of harmonic ingenuity, technical extravagance, and pulsing rhythms.

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Feb. 26-March 1: **Freda Payne,** best known for the

venerable Motown hit "Band of Gold," from 1970, may not be the first person to come to mind when Ella Fitzgerald is mentioned, but previous appearances here have proved that she has more than enough old-school panache to make a solid showing in this tribute to the first lady of swing.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Feb. 28-March 2: The trumpeter **Wallace Roney** titled his most recent album "Jazz," but he's not stuck in the mainstream. Roney has his ear to the street, embracing hip-hop elements and eschewing straight-ahead rhythms. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Feb. 28-March 2: The majestic vocalist Big Joe Turner could sing the blues in whatever dialect you wanted—jazz, rock and roll, R. & B. As long as it had a beat, he could get his magisterial bellow around it and make it moan. **Kevin Mahogany,** another Kansas City singer with his own from-the-gut style, tips his hat to Turner, assisted by the vocalist **Kathy Kosins.** They've also got a souped-up band behind them: the Godfathers of Groove, which is the organist **Reuben Wilson,** the guitarist **Grant Green, Jr.,** and the master drummer **Bernard (Pretty) Purdie.** Shake, rattle, and roll, indeed.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Feb. 27: **Catherine Russell** has a luscious voice and the ability to blur the lines between jazz and blues. Her off-hand flair makes her new album, "Sentimental Streak," a delight.

ST. ANN'S WAREHOUSE
38 Water St., Brooklyn (718-254-8779)—Feb. 29-March 1: On the first night of this stand, **John Zorn** premières a new work, "The Dreamers," and returns the following evening to put a new spin on "Essential Cinema," which incorporates pioneering avant-garde films by Joseph Cornell, Kenneth Anger, Maya Deren, and Harry Smith. Both shows feature familiar Zorn collaborators—including the guitarist **Marc Ribot,** the percussionist **Cyro Baptista,** and the bassist **Trevor Dunn**—for whom the eclectic genre-crossing and jump-cut aesthetic of the composer is by now second nature.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Feb. 26-March 2: The **Kurt Rosenwinkel Group.** The guitarist Rosenwinkel performs best in the presence of his steady partner, the saxophonist **Mark Turner,** an uncommon player who shares his ability to blend the cerebral and the lyrical.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Gustave Courbet."** Opens Feb. 27. ♦ The influence that Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) had on other painters is far-reaching, encompassing Cézanne and Balthus, Corot and Picasso, but **"Poussin and Nature: Arcadian Visions"** focusses on the artist's poetic affinities. Starting around the time that Poussin settled in Rome, in 1624, the show opens with a roomful of paintings built around scenes from Ovid's Metamorphoses. They are grand, lush, and languidly erotic, with nude bodies echoing the elements of the landscapes. This is nowhere more evident than in a small painting of Daphne transforming into a laurel tree, but elsewhere women's supine bodies undulate like the hills behind them, and satyrs' craggy heads recall rock formations. The Edenic idyll darkens in later paintings, when Christian story lines are introduced—several depict threat by snakes. The poignancy of these works is profound; mortality, and the possibility of trouble in paradise, adds a satisfying bitterness to the prelapsarian sweet. Through May 11. ♦ **"Jasper Johns: Gray."** Through May 4. ♦ **"Lee Friedlander: A Ramble in Olmsted Parks."** Through May 11. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Lucian Freud: The Painter's Etchings."** Through March 10. ♦ **"Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today."** Opens March 2. ♦ **"Design and the Elastic Mind."** Through May 12. ♦ **"Jan De Cock: Denkmal 11."** Through April 14. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Cai Guo-Qiang: I Want to Believe."** Through May 28. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Chimneys and Towers: Charles Demuth's Late Paintings."** Through April 27. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Ghada Amer: Love Has No End."** Through Oct. 19. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Water: H_2O=Life."** Through May 26. ♦ Around five hundred specimens flit through the Butterfly Conservatory, a pocket-size hothouse planted with orchids and other rain-forest flora. Through May 26. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Designed for Pleasure: The World of Edo Japan in Prints and Paintings."** Opens Feb. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Parmigianino's Antea: A Beautiful Artifice."** Through April 27. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"The Collections of Barbara Bloom"** revisits—and sometimes revises—the artist's output since the nineteen-eighties. The rear galleries are more cohesive and illuminating than those near the front, but Bloom's over-all project, which might be described as highlighting the weirdness of objects, shines through in one section after another. High points include an installation devoted to *kintsugi*, the Japanese practice of repairing ceramics with gold-laced lacquer to illuminate the breakage; a collection of Braille-embossed objects (an ashtray, a copy of *Playboy*); and a wall of photographs that playfully examine the concept of framing. A grid of color samples, with such unlikely captions as "Nietzsche" and "Miranda Rights," offers a sense of Bloom's poetic-philosophical approach to the world and the objects that populate it. Through May 4. ♦ **"Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art."** Through May 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"From The New Yorker to Shrek: The Art of William Steig."** Through March 16. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Michelangelo, Vasari, and Their Contemporaries: Drawings from the Uffizi."** Through April 20. ♦ **"Close Encounters: Irving Penn Portraits of Artists and Writers."** Through April 13. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution."** Through May 31. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
FIRE AND ICE

To make not one but two films about the burning of women at the stake suggests, at the very least, a taste for the inflammatory, yet no director's eye was cooler or less frenzied than that of Carl Theodor Dreyer. First came "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (1928), whose place among the peaks of silent cinema is now undisputed, and then "Day of Wrath," which screens on March 2 at Anthology Film Archives. It dates from 1943, by which time Dreyer's native Denmark was under Nazi occupation, and, although the tale is set in the seventeenth century, its mood of threat and censure is unmistakable. An old woman, about to be executed as a witch, curses her accuser, the village pastor, and the rest of the story cowers under that spell; the pastor's young wife has an affair with his son from an earlier marriage, and they in turn are oppressed and denounced by the pastor's elderly mother. Anyone expecting a model for "The Crucible," however, will be disappointed; what stirs Dreyer is not hysteria or vengefulness but moral gravity—shadows lying heavy on the light.

—*Anthony Lane*

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

MARC RIBOUD
Riboud, one of Magnum's most prolific and long-lived photojournalists (he's eighty-five this year), works in the Cartier-Bresson tradition of personal reportage. This survey of photographs made all over the world includes a number of instantly recognizable images among many more that are unfamiliar. The best of the latter is a series from Castro's Cuba, taken in 1963, that turns into an essay on fashion as an expression of personal style. Riboud's famous image of a painter perched between girders on the Eiffel Tower is shown alongside others from the same 1953 shoot and a 2007 sequence that follows workers high atop the *Times* building, in New York. Through March 8. (Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)

CHRIS WARE
"Drawings for New York Periodicals" showcases original panels—including a series of five Thanksgiving covers for this magazine—drawn by the graphic novelist and the author of the Acme Novelty Library. The *Times'* ongoing Sunday series "Building Stories" anatomizes, in thirty panels, an hour per day in the life of each inhabitant of a three-story Chicago apartment building. The blue-pencilled panels, inked over in black, are compulsively readable—visitors who plan to duck in and out will find themselves running late for their next appointment. Through March 15. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

Short List

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN: PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through March 15. **CARROLL DUNHAM:** Skarstedt, 20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060. Through April 5. **DIANA HOROWITZ:** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 212-535-8810. Through March 15. **FRANZ KLINE:** L & M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020. Through March 15. **JEFF WALL:** Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through March 22.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

NAYLAND BLAKE
Blake's recent assemblages, made mostly from objects encountered on daily walks, are a slight addition to the ever-expanding field of formalist, found-object sculpture. (The New Museum's inaugural installation serves as a primer.) Plastic water bottles, beads, and bits of wire form attenuated wall-mounted works; other sculptures incorporate pieces of painted wood and felt, recalling the work of Jessica Stockholder and Ree Morton. Blake's drawings, with elements cribbed from cartoons and tattoo culture, serve as a counterpoint to his abstract constructions. Through March 8. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

LUIS GISPERT
It's hard, in an art world full of would-be bombshells, to make a bona-fide shocking image. It's even more difficult to make shock feel necessary. Gispert comes close on both counts with his lyrical, upsetting twenty-six-minute film "Smother." Set in a nightmarish Miami in the garish nineteen-eighties, the film follows a sweet little boy who has a boom box made of cardboard and a tabloid virago of a mother. There's also an evil slaughterhouse worker and a German shepherd that becomes the child's alter ego. The film is a gripping vision of innocence cauterized by sex, violence, and tacky style. Through March 1. (Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.)

EDWARD GRAZDA
Grazda, known primarily for his photographs of Afghanistan before, during, and after Taliban rule, works in the tradition of the concerned reporter. He is far more interested in people than in events, and his images are at once tough-minded and poetic, savvy and soulful. The black-and-white pictures that he made in Latin America between 1972 and 1979, fifty of which are gathered here for the first time, may remind viewers of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank, and other keen observers of people in public. Whether his subject is a boy with a homemade cross or a woman breathing fire, Grazda's work delivers an understated kind of amazement. Through March 1. (Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444.)

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE
Irving Penn, whose portraits are now at the Morgan Library, arrived at elegance so naturally that his photographs have a kind of charmed inevitability. But Mapplethorpe's photographs of celebrities often feel effortful and anxious. The nearly sixty pictures here include some of his most memorable (a cold-eyed Debbie Harry, an insanely imperious Louise Nevelson, Alice Neel in a trance), along with a well-chosen group of lesser-known portraits—Norman Mailer, Fran Lebowitz, Lisette Model, and Yoko Ono among them. Many are knockouts, graphic and bold, but very few are inventive, and none can compare to the artist's career-making sex pictures. Through March 15. (Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

MATTHEW RONAY
With these six tight Rorschachian sculptures assembled from wood (polished walnut, pine, maple, oak), string, canvas, metal, and so on, Ronay veers into more contemplative, less whimsical territory than in his last show at the gallery. Perhaps the times demand it. Unchanged is Ronay's impeccable craftsmanship and pristinely economical arrangements. Sections of his ambiguous rebuses suggest Islamic architecture, divining rods, sandbags, bottles, fern fronds—even a corpse. The accumulated mystery only increases with repeated viewing. Ronay is nothing if not deliberate and in control; viewers need only surrender to the reverie of free association. Through March 8. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

RUTH ROOT
Out in some chic precinct of the galaxy, one imagines a sleek spaceship with a holodeck that looks like a Ruth Root painting. Flat, shaped panels of aluminum, with rounded corners and tabs or flanges protruding from the sides, are painted in hard-edged fields of enamel in puce, chartreuse, gunmetal, apricot, beige, rose, and black. The mod lozenges of the supports paired with the parallelograms of color are optically zingy, if cumulatively a little predictable. A bonus comes in the unexpected guise of the press release, a wordless series of thumbnail images in which Root lays out a manifesto of her sources, from Ellsworth Kelly to shaped bathmats. Through March 15. (Kreps, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-741-8849.)

CATHERINE SULLIVAN
Take the basic components of filmmaking, scramble, and serve, and you've got Sullivan's "Triangle of Need." The multiple projections use more than one medium—film transferred to video, and 16-mm. film in both black-and-white and color—and the script fluctuates between spoken English, subtitles, and Dada-esque gibberish. Filmed on location at a Gilded Age, proto-Neverland estate in Miami, the piece, whose impossible "subject" veers from Cro-Magnon man to Nigerian e-mail fraud to figure skating, might register as a pointless exercise in confusion if the performances weren't so committed and the filmmaking weren't so rigorous. The result is challenging and holds your attention. But the question remains: what is Sullivan trying—or trying not—to say? Through March 15. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

CARRIE MAE WEEMS
Weems, an artist who uses photography and video to delve deep into issues of African-American history and identity, is the subject of a museum-style survey that works both as introduction to and refresher course in one of the more remarkable careers in art. In a red-tinted series that appropriates early anthropological images, she questions photography's role in defining black subjects. Weems herself appears in a grid of black-and-white pictures staged around a dining-room table, skirting domestic melodrama in linked vignettes about a woman in and out of love. The most recent images find the artist as a stranger

PHOTOGRAPH BY H. & H. JACOBSEN/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

in a strange land, wandering through Rome like a ghost or an avenging angel. Through March 8. (Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701.)

XU ZHEN

Xu's themes are exploration, boundary breaching, and nationalism—both American and Chinese—as slapstick violence. Thus a speck of dust is revealed, in a view through a microscope, to bear a boot print like Neil Armstrong's on the moon. A video mockumentary purports to show the artist and his squad of "scientists" sawing a chunk off the top of Mt. Everest, then toppling the pilfered ice into Tibet. In a second video, Xu and another team of merry pranksters stage Chinese "invasions" of Myanmar, Mongolia, and Russia by driving remote-controlled toy tanks across what are alleged to be the neighboring nations' borders. Through March 8. (Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

Short List

MARGARITA CABRERA / SHANNON PLUMB: Meltzer, 525-531 W. 26th St. 212-727-9330. Through March 15. **AMY CUTLER:** Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450. Through April 5. **ROBERT GOBER:** Marks, 521 W. 21st St.; 526 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through March 29. **BILL JENSEN:** Danese, 535 W. 24th St. 212-223-2227. Through March 15. **BRUCE NAUMAN:** Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through March 29. **ADRIAN PIPER:** Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545. Opens March 1. **SETH PRICE:** Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through March 8. **ANDRO WEKUA:** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Opens March 1.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

KLARA LIDEN

A narrow passageway leads to a dimly lit chamber with a leather sofa. It looks perfect for a meditative moment or a makeout session—but what is that noise coming from the ceiling? Liden's white cube within a cube, constructed for this show, includes, unseen to the viewer, an entryway for pigeons and food to lure them in. Lurking in their own space behind and above the little room, they provide a subtle but uncanny soundtrack of scratching, pecking, and shuffling. Depending on your mood, you might find it soothing (a phenomenological reminder of a world outside our own) or infernal (like an audio outtake from Hitchcock's "The Birds"). Through March 9. (Spaulings, 165 East Broadway. 212-477-5006.)

AGNES MARTIN

Blanket adulation can ultimately do more harm than good to an artist's reputation, so it seems fair to observe that some things in this small survey of Martin's works on paper (dating from 1960 through her last-known drawing, made in 2004) are better than others. There isn't a dud, however, in the bunch. Within her famously minimal parameters of grids, dots, and earth- or sky-toned washes, she seems to have been incapable of making an uninteresting mark, and many of the works—most about the size of an album cover—are breathtaking. Through March 15. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

DANCE

STATE BALLET OF GEORGIA

Nina Ananiashvili's boldness, flourish, and unabashed emotionality onstage are legend. Trained as an ice skater before switching to ballet, she joined the Bolshoi in 1981 and has been a principal with American Ballet Theatre since 1993. Since 2004, she has been working to revive her home country's national ballet company, which had seen better days, bringing in new dancers and revamping the repertoire. For its New York première, at BAM, the company will perform two programs, which will include Balanchine's "Chaconne" and "Duo Concertant"; a Georgian folk-inspired piece, "Sagalobeli," by Yuri Possokhov, a former Bolshoi dancer and the resident choreographer at the San Francisco Ballet; and two pieces by Alexei Ratmansky, "Bizet Variations" and "Dreams About Japan." (Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Feb. 27 and Feb. 29-March 1 at 7:30 and March 2 at 3.)

BALLET DE MONTERREY

This contemporary-ballet company, based in Mexico's third-largest city, presents a diverse program of Latin-tinged works. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 26-27 at 7:30, Feb. 28-29 at 8, March 1 at 2 and 8, and March 2 at 2 and 7:30.)

YANIRA CASTRO + COMPANY

More accustomed to alternative spaces, Castro does her best to transform Dance Theatre Workshop's traditional stage for "Center of Sleep." The audience is free to wander, and some of the performers' choices depend on those made by spectators. Tricky sequences executed in close canon give way to gender-role swapping and troubled intimacy—couples in their underwear tickling each other and brushing each other's teeth. Stephan Moore's live sound design at times calls to mind a retro video-game war. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 27-March 1 at 7:30 and 9:30.)

NATHANTRICE/RITUALS DANCE THEATRE

The 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Festival continues with what Trice calls VAST (Visual Audio Sensory Theatre). In his new piece, "Tactics," the dancers react so strongly to unseen forces—shoving away, taking in, pursuing, evading—that the forces become almost visible; it's high-energy dancing pushed into the realm of mime. Also on the bill is "Conversations," a mood piece for three couples, and excerpts from a work in progress, "Bottom of a Kiss . . . Floating." (Ailey Citigroup Theatre, 405 W. 55th St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 27-28 and March 1 at 8 and March 2 at 2.)

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY

The newest works this season are two companion pieces made last year: "De Sueños (Of Dreams)" and "De Sueños Que Se Repiten (Of Recurring Dreams)." Both are set to selections from the Kronos Quartet's imaginative album of Mexican music, "Nuevo," and exhibit a choreographic imagination that's undiminished. The Mexican theme prompts visions festive and sombre, humor dark and puerile. Michael Trusnovec makes a glorious stag. In the course of two weeks, the two dreams rotate through a hit-and-miss selection from Taylor's unparalleled back catalogue. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Feb. 28 and March 4 at 7, Feb. 29 at 8, March 1 at 2 and 8, and March 2 at 3. Through March 16.)

DOMINIC WALSH DANCE THEATRE

Walsh brings his small contemporary-ballet company to Joyce SoHo with an ambitious program. Jiří Kylián's "Double You," a metaphysical solo for a male dancer performed in conjunction with two swinging pendulums, set to Bach, joins Mauro Bigonzetti's "Pression," a gender-bending pas de quatre; "Amadeus," by Walsh, is a tribute to Mozart, while his "Le Spectre de la Rose" is an eroticized reimagining of Fokine's famous 1911 ballet. (155 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. Feb. 28-March 1 at 8.)

RICHMOND BALLET

The Virginia-based ensemble returns with an evening of works by the up-and-coming New York choreographer Jessica Lang, a former Twyla Tharp dancer. The three pieces—"La Belle Danse," "Women and the Sea: A Tribute to Will Barnett," and "To Familiar Spaces in Dream"—show the influence of Paul Taylor and Martha Graham but also a deep sensitivity to balletic gesture and, in the case of "La Belle Danse," to Baroque patterns and courtliness. (Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. March 1 at 8.)

TCHAIKOVSKY BALLET AND ORCHESTRA

The city of Perm, in the Ural Mountains, is the kind of place people want to leave, but, in the Second World War, the Kirov was based in this provincial capital, and the local ballet company soaked up the Petersburg style and was transformed. At

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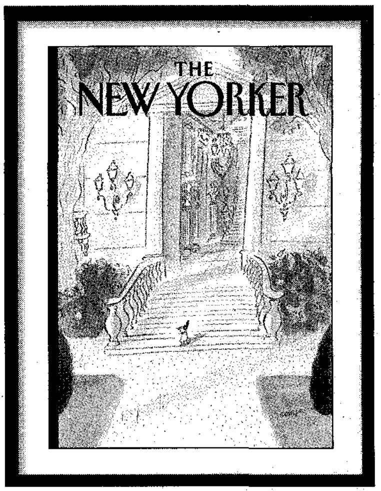
SPECIAL OFFER

Jean-Jacques Sempé



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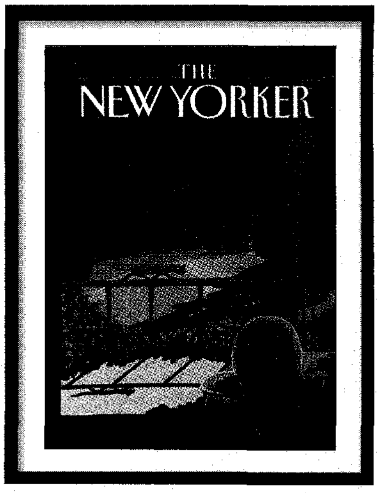

"Cat's Night Out"
Published August 8, 2005

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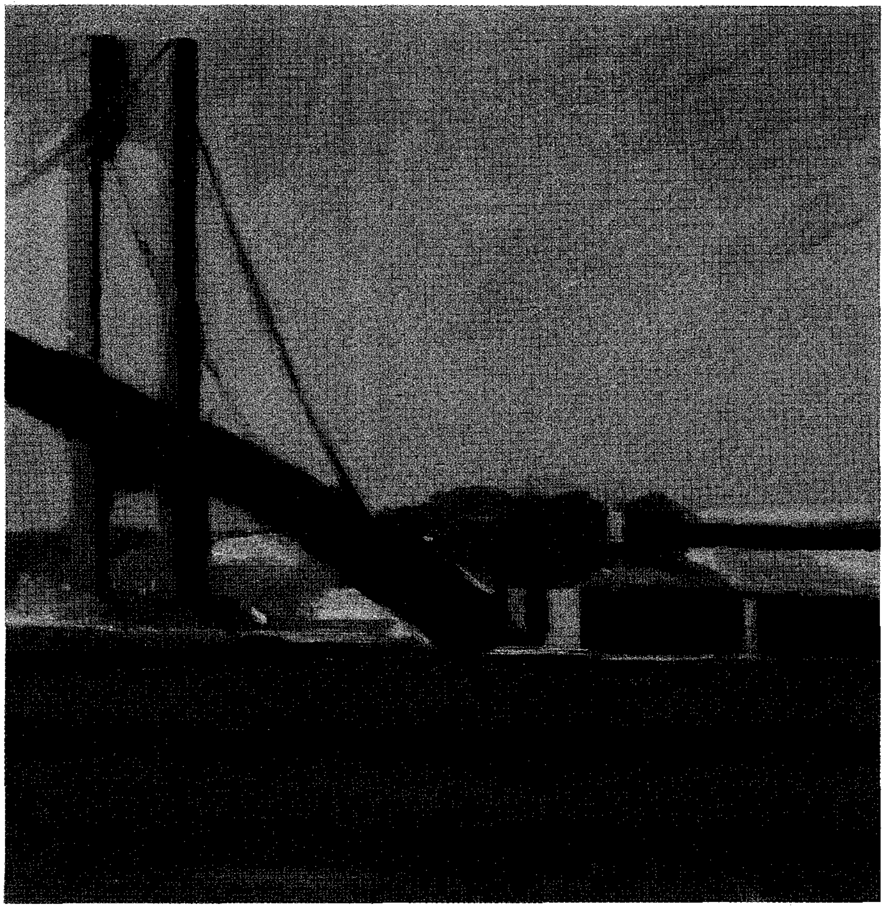
the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, it will perform "Romeo and Juliet," in a version by Nikolai Boyarchikov, a former director of the company. The vivid score, by Prokofiev, will be played live. (1 Center St., Newark, N.J. 888-466-5722. March 2 at 4.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
An advance look at the new production of Henry Purcell's "King Arthur," opening later this week at the New York City Opera, directed and choreographed by the peripatetic Mark Morris. At the Guggenheim, Morris and the conductor Jane Glover will discuss Morris's unconventional approach, in which he has eliminated the original spoken text to create a witty and sophisticated blend of song and dance, while singers from the N.Y.C.O. and dancers from Morris's company perform excerpts. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. March 3 at 7:30.)



Diana Horowitz's painting "Verrazano Snow," at Hirschl & Adler Modern.

IMAGE COURTESY OF HIRSCHL & ADLER MODERN

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Franco Zeffirelli's production of **"Carmen"** is not one of his more vibrant creations. But Olga Borodina, the titular Gypsy, still possesses one of the sexiest voices in opera, and the young tenor Marcelo Álvarez is passionately sincere as her lover Don José. With Krassimira Stoyanova and Lucio Gallo; Emmanuel Villaume keeps the drama potent in the pit. (Feb. 27 and March 1 at 8. Nancy Fabiola Herrera replaces Borodina on Feb. 27. These are the final performances.) ♦ In taking on the title role in Benjamin Britten's **"Peter Grimes"** at the Met, the American tenor Anthony Dean Griffey joins a glorious tradition that has included the contributions of the heroic Jon Vickers, the elegant Anthony Rolfe Johnson, and the incisive Philip Langridge. Expect Griffey, a singer with a lovely tone and great sensitivity, to offer a more vulnerable interpretation of Britten's tough and troubled fisherman. Patricia Racette and Anthony Michaels-Moore join him at the head of the cast; the fine Scottish maestro Donald Runnicles conducts. (Feb. 28 at 7:30 and March 3 at 8.) ♦ Bartlett Sher's winsome new staging of **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Elina Garanča, Franco Vassallo, José Manuel Zapata, Maurizio Muraro, and Ruggero Raimondi; Frédéric Chaslin. (Feb. 29 at 8. This is the final performance.) ♦ Elijah Moshinsky's production of Verdi's **"Otello"** almost overpowers the Met's stage with its towering scenery, but when the principals are front and center the action comes alive as gripping theatre. Johan Botha successfully takes up the challenge of the title role with an intensely lyrical and technically secure portrayal; Renée Fleming, as Desdemona, proves that she can still exploit the resources of her uncommonly expressive voice with elegance and taste. With Carlo Guelfi as Iago; Semyon Bychkov. (March 1 at 1 and March 4 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK: "LA SONNAMBULA"
Is Bellini's opera—a favorite vehicle for such divas as Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland—an underrated masterwork or merely a heavy dose of dazzling bel-canto wizardry? Eve Queler's concert-opera company offers a chance to decide; the soprano Eglise Gutierrez steps into the title role, heading a cast that also features the tenor Dmitry Korchak and the bass-baritone Ferruccio Furlanetto. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 27 at 7:30.)

AMATO OPERA: "DON PASQUALE"
When Anthony Amato directed Donizetti's immortal comedy back in the nineteen-fifties, his beloved wife, Sally, sang the role of the crafty vixen Norina. In the midst of the company's sixtieth season, Maestro Amato stages it once more (in English) at his diminutive theatre in the East Village. (319 Bowery, at 2nd St. March 1 at 7:30 and March 2 at 2:30. Through March 16.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
The choreographer Mark Morris discusses his upcoming production of Purcell's "King Arthur" at New York City Opera in a preview performance at the Guggenheim Museum. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. March 3 at 7:30. For more information, see Dance.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
Superego meets id at Carnegie Hall this week when the supremely cultivated ensemble arrives with an impulsive and hard-driving guest maestro, Valery Gergiev. Feb. 29 at 8: Impassioned works by Berlioz (excerpts from "Roméo et Juliette"), Wagner (the Prelude and Liebestod from "Tristan und Isolde"), and Debussy ("La Mer"). ♦ March 1 at 8: Yefim Bronfman is the soloist in Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2 (a diamond-hard essay from the composer's early years) in a concert that also features works by Debussy and Tchaikovsky (the Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique," getting quite a run in New York of late). ♦ March 2 at 2: Tchaikovsky's similarly unneglected Fifth Symphony closes a program that begins with music by Verdi and Liszt ("Les Préludes"). (212-721-6500.)

ENSEMBLE ACJW
Christopher Hogwood has a gift for arranging sound. In the next concert by Carnegie Hall's young-artists ensemble, he leads it in what will be brisk and glowing performances of works by Haydn (the Symphony No. 22, "The Philosopher"), Martinů, and Stravinsky (the "Pulcinella" Suite). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. March 1 at 7.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
The eloquent baritone Thomas Quasthoff and the hardworking singers of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus share the glory in James Levine's latest Carnegie Hall outing, a concert devoted entirely to works by Schubert (the "Tragic" Symphony and a sheaf of orchestrated songs) and William Bolcom (the New York première of the Symphony No. 8 for Chorus and Orchestra). (212-247-7800. March 3 at 8.)

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK
Kent Tritle conducts his charges in a choral classic, Fauré's Requiem, along with a new work by a notable contemporary composer—Paul Moravec's "Songs of Love and War." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 4 at 8.)

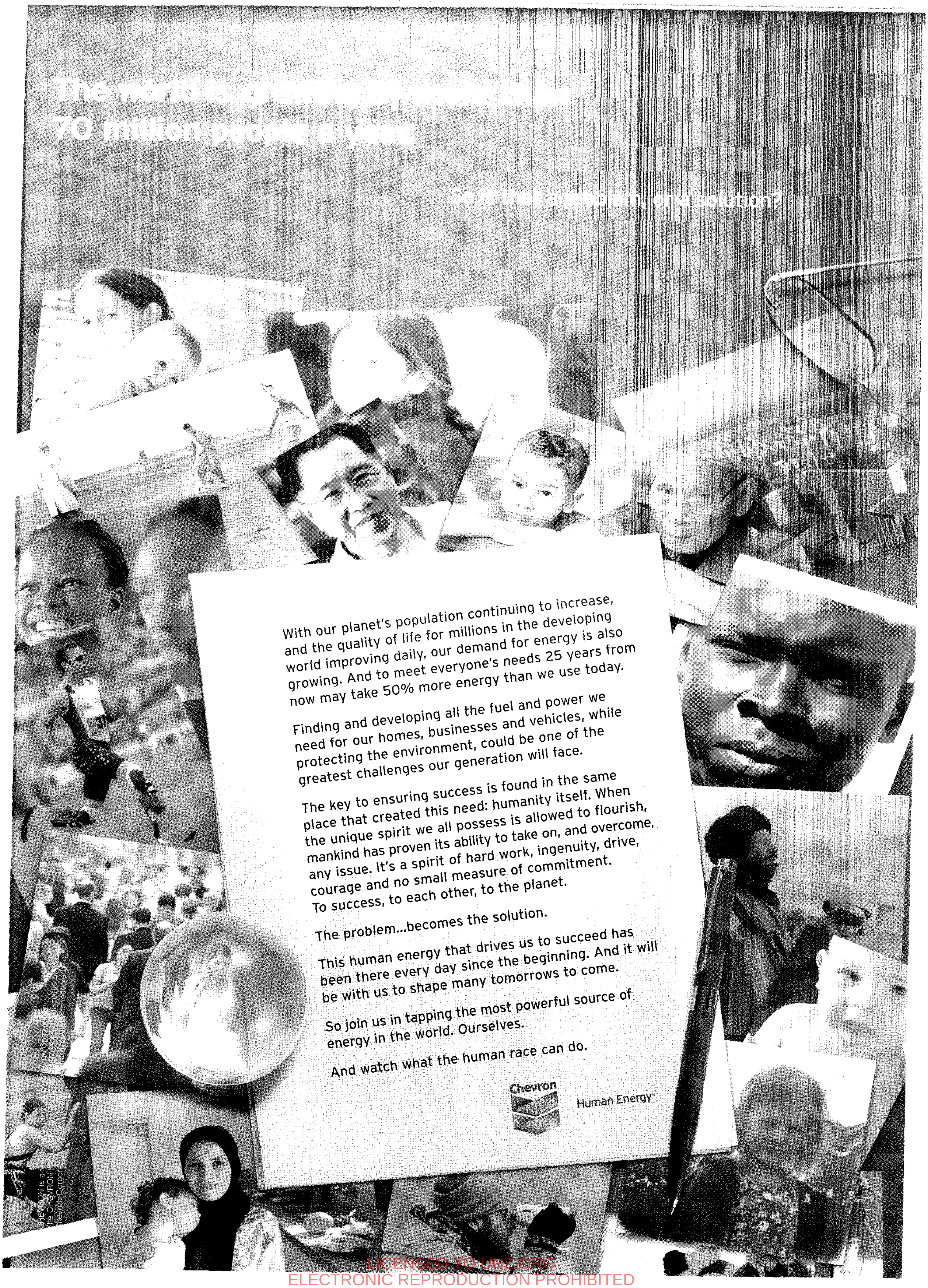
RECITALS

BRENTANO STRING QUARTET
The pianist Thomas Sauer joins the group, admired for its shining sound and interpretive precision, for a program of works by Bach, Mozart, Bartók (the Quartet No. 6), and Elliott Carter (the Piano Quintet). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 27 at 7:30.)

ALBAN BERG QUARTET
The magnificent Viennese ensemble, long prized for the intellectual and sonic richness of its performances, makes its final New York appearance (under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center). The group offers quartets by Haydn, Beethoven (in A Minor, Op. 132), and its namesake (the seldom played Quartet, Op. 3). (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 212-875-5788. Feb. 27 at 7:30.)

ALARM WILL SOUND
Alan Pierson's latest program with his vibrant young ensemble—operating on the margins of minimalism, modernism, and rock—offers works by Nancarrow, Ligeti, John Adams (the New York première of "Son of Chamber Symphony"), Aphex Twin, and Harrison Birtwistle. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 28 at 7:30.)

LISA MOORE: "SPOTLIGHT ON RZEWSKI"
Frederic Rzewski, the American maverick whose barbaric yawp has brought forth such important piano works as "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues" and "De Profundis" (a melodrama based on the prison letters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of Oscar Wilde), is about to turn seventy. The valiant Lisa Moore plays these works (and a New York première) at the Renee Weiler Concert Hall. (46 Barrow St. Feb. 28 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

"ART OF THE GUITAR" SERIES: "75TH BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE TO JULIAN BREAM"
Bream, who, along with Segovia, dominated the postwar guitar scene, receives a heartfelt toast from a group of notable guitarists—including William Kanengiser, David Leisner, and Benjamin Verdery—who will each play a work identified with him, by such composers as Britten, Falla, and Takemitsu. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 1 at 8.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
Rachel Barton Pine, a violinist of firm tone and broad interests, joins the ensemble in a treasure-trove program of works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Spohr (the Nonet). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 155 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. March 3 at 2 and 7:30.)

SEQUITUR
In a typically well-integrated Sequitur concert, the cellist Gregory Hesselink accompanies three estimable new-music singers—Mary Nessinger, Elizabeth Farnum, and Judith Kellock—in works by Morton Feldman, Harold Meltzer ("Two Songs from 'Silas Marner'"), Bernard Rands ("Walcott Songs"), and others. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 3 at 8.)

"THE MUSIC OF EZRA LADERMAN"
Talented friends of the distinguished Yale professor (including the bassoonist Frank Morelli and the Biava Quartet) mark his twentieth anniversary on the faculty with a recital of his music. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 3 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

BEYOND BELIEF
A documentary, directed by Beth Murphy, about two 9/11 widows who travel to Afghanistan to meet war widows there. Opening Feb. 29. (Cinema Village.)

CHICAGO 10
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Feb. 29. (In wide release.)

CHOP SHOP
Ramin Bahrani directed this drama, about the young denizens of a street of auto-body shops in Queens. Opening Feb. 27. (Film Forum.)

CITY OF MEN
Paolo Morelli directed this drama, about two friends in a Rio slum on opposite sides of a drug war. In Portuguese. Opening Feb. 29. (In wide release.)

THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL
Justin Chadwick directed this historical drama, based on Philippa Gregory's novel, about Anne Boleyn (Natalie Portman), Mary Boleyn (Scarlett Johansson), and their battle for the love of Henry VIII (Eric Bana). Opening Feb. 29. (In wide release.)

PENELOPE
Mark Palansky directed this comic fantasy, about a disfigured young woman (Christina Ricci) whose parents try to find her a man to marry. Opening Feb. 29. (In wide release.)

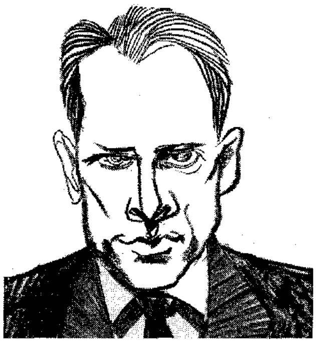
SEMI-PRO
A basketball comedy, set in the nineteen-seventies, about an A.B.A. owner-coach-player who wants to make the N.B.A. Starring Will Ferrell, Woody Harrelson, and André Benjamin; directed by Kent Alterman. Opening Feb. 29. (In wide release.)

THE UNFORESEEN
A documentary by Laura Dunn, about the battle between developers and environmentalists in an Austin, Texas, suburb. Opening Feb. 29. (Cinema Village.)

NOW PLAYING

THE BAND'S VISIT
Not a musical comedy but a low-key study of thwarted musicians, touched with comic grace.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
THE STILL CENTER



Paul Taylor's company is known for having handsome, beefy men. Maybe there actually haven't been so many. Maybe these big guys just stood out. In any case, the one it would be hard not to notice now is Michael Trusnovec, five feet ten inches tall, with red-gold hair, and strong as all getout. Dancers speak of the body being "worked"—that is, stretched, strung like a bow—or not. Every one of Trusnovec's muscles is worked, while every cell in his brain seems to be pulsing with the music. But, while moving with such force, he also has a kind of angelic calm. His landings are soft, his manner modest. His line is a joy to look at. As the company's star, he is onstage almost any night; he has an especially beautiful role in "Promethean Fire" and a tremendous solo in "Black Tuesday." Taylor's upcoming season, which opens at City Center on Feb. 28, will feature a linked pair of new pieces on Mexican themes, "De Sueños (Of Dreams)" and "De Sueños Que Se Repiten (Of Recurring Dreams)." In them, Trusnovec is the deer from the ritual Deer Dance. He will do his usual stuff while wearing a large rack of antlers on his head.

—*Joan Acocella*

Written and directed by Eran Kolirin, it tells the story of an Egyptian police band that gets lost on a trip to Israel. The travelling musicians wind up in a desert town, dependent on the mercy and generosity of Dina (Ronit Elkabetz), the owner of a local café, who feeds them and finds them places to sleep. Their entire stay requires a delicate maintenance of dignity on both sides; the peace between old enemies is all the funnier for being so frail. Dina, one of the more forceful female characters in recent cinema, enjoys a melancholy half-flirtation with the band's leader (Sasson Gabai) and a more straightforward dalliance with one of his underlings. The music, when it finally strikes up, has an air of quiet celebration, and rightly so. In Arabic, Hebrew, and halting English.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 2/11 & 18/08.) (In wide release.)

BE KIND REWIND

A new comedy, just about, from the director Michel Gondry, whose ability to dream up appealing conceits has yet to be matched by the will, or the coherence, to see them through. Jack Black plays a loafer named Jerry, who, after a spasm of electrocution, ends up erasing all the tapes in the local video store; he and a reluctant employee (Mos Def) set about filming homemade replacements for each movie, and, in the process, they attract a minor cult following. Gondry gives himself the chance to snipe and smile at bloated Hollywood productions, then wastes it. We see mere snippets of Jerry's own versions, but that is more than enough; worse still, the story that Gondry weaves around them feels no less shapeless and amateur, and his pretense that an entire present-day community (in Passaic, New Jersey) would stop to laud such ramblings is, at best, nostalgically naïve. With Mia Farrow, who looks genuinely bewildered, and Danny Glover.—*A.L.* (2/25/08) (In wide release.)

CHARLIE BARTLETT

With teen comedies, as with teen-agers themselves, cleverness goes only so far without heart; if this film has one, it's artificial. The protagonist (Anton Yelchin), a rich kid who's been thrown out of prep school and lands in a suburban public high school, shows up in a blazer and tie and wonders why he doesn't fit in. Shades of "Rushmore," of course—they wish. Charlie ingratiates himself with his classmates by becoming their unofficial psychopharmacologist, and comes into conflict with the hip, beleaguered principal (Robert Downey, Jr.) when he starts to date his savvy daughter (Kat Dennings). The director, Jon Poll, never finds the right tone; the comedy careens from cloying to over the top, the breakthroughs and the revelations come with no price, and, despite fine, vulnerable performances from Dennings and Downey, the film, with its prefab resolutions, is utterly devoid of life.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

CHICAGO 10

A group of liberated, spontaneous young men (Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Rennie Davis, Tom Hayden, Bobby Seale, et al.) against the squares and the prissy-voiced elderly (the prosecutor Thomas Foran, Judge Julius Hoffman): that's the way the director Brett Morgen conceives the trial of the Chicago Seven, in March, 1969, when the hippies, yippies, pacifists, and student leftists who organized the protests at the Democratic Convention the previous summer were charged with conspiracy. (Morgen stretched the number to ten by adding Bobby Seale and two defense lawyers.) In other words, he sees the trial in the same romantic-revolutionary terms that the defendants and their followers embraced at the time. The trial itself, which the combined misbehavior of the defendants and the judge turned into a shambles, is re-created in animation, with the actors Mark Ruffalo, Liev Schreiber, Jeffrey Wright, the late Roy Scheider, and others voicing the characters; the courtroom scenes are keyed to actual films of the 1968 protests, an amazingly detailed archival collection of news and personal footage. The animation suits the antic goings on at the trial, and the editing of the archival footage is superb, but Morgen ignores everything else—including the struggles within the Democratic Party and the effect of the protests on the country for

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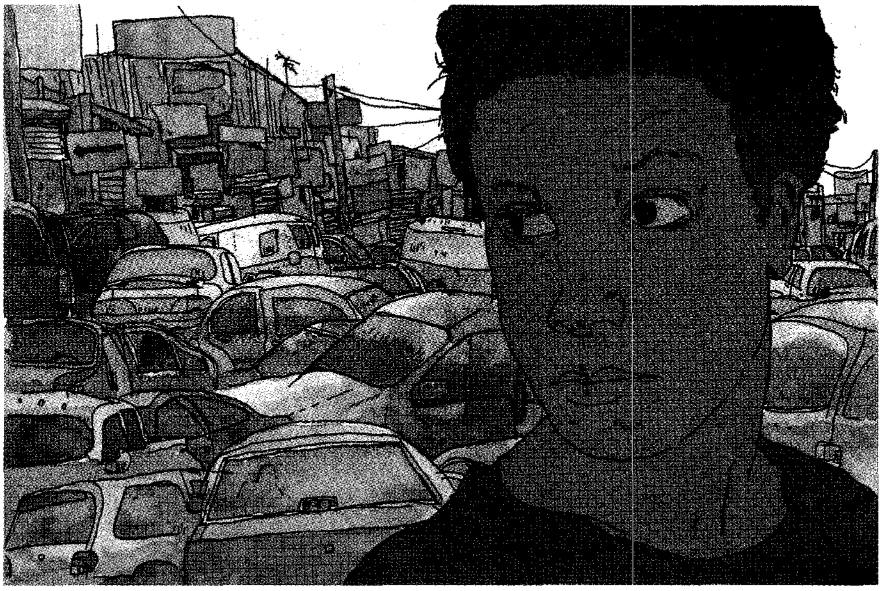
years to come. At a moment when a youth movement has gathered behind a candidate capable of seizing power the old-fashioned way, Hoffman and Rubin's nonsense about "revolution" just looks lame.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

CLOVERFIELD

Think "Godzilla" with A.D.D. Matt Reeves's frantic début, co-produced by J. J. Abrams, starts at a social gathering in New York and ends in devastation, thanks to the arrival of a khaki-colored beast the size of Lincoln Center. The movie's big selling point—and, as it happens, the reason it lurches close to the unwatchable—is that we observe the mayhem exclusively through the lens of a camcorder held by Hud (T. J. Miller) as he and three companions (Michael Stahl-David, Jessica Lucas, and Lizzy Caplan) stagger through the city, trying to save a damsel in distress. Given that the rescuers voluntarily walk through subway tunnels in the dark, in open defiance of every monster-movie convention, you can't help feeling that they deserve every giant poisonous spider that comes their way. Blitzed by the chaos, you may not notice just how much the movie cheats: Hud, for instance, appears to be editing as he goes, and his camera possesses magical powers of endurance. The headlong visuals may have a certain novelty and zip, but the rest of the project—the vacant motivation, the dialogue, the weakness for grinding coincidence—is nothing new.—*A.L.* (1/28/08) (In wide release.)



Alejandro Polanco stars in "Chop Shop," a drama set in Queens, opening Feb. 27.

VICTOR MARCHAND KERLOW

THE COUNTERFEITERS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

DEFINITELY, MAYBE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

THE DUCHESS OF LANGEAIS

The seventy-nine-year-old Jacques Rivette's period piece, adapted from a novel by Balzac, offers few of the graceful adornments of costume drama. Set in the reactionary era of the Restoration, it shudders with the cold, tight grip of absolute power. The movie starts with a wounded retired general, the Marquis de Montriveau, declaring his love to a nun—the duchess of the title—through a latticework of iron bars, and continues as a flashback to the entanglements that led to that grim impasse. The marquis, played by Guillaume Depardieu with a feral energy worthy of his father, meets the duchess (Jeanne Balibar, an intellectual diva) at a high-society soirée and falls hard for her. When she elegantly parries his advances, he threatens violence, sending the story into strange, disturbing dimensions. Rivette strips social relations down to a clash of wills: his scenes compress the romantic fury of paintings by Delacroix and Géricault into drawing-room settings and depict the moral equivalent of war fought sitting down. Though the drama goes off the rails near the end, the overall impression remains harrowing and unforgettable. In French.—*R.B.* (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

4 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS AND 2 DAYS

There may be filmgoers who still harbor a footling prejudice against tales of Romanian abortion; in which case, here is the way to trounce them. Cristian Mungiu's forbidding drama, the winner of the Palme d'Or at last year's Cannes Film Festival, is set in Bucharest in 1987. Anamaria Marinca stars as Otilia, a young student trying to help a friend and finding herself thwarted, at every turn, by a jaded and hostile world. Her roommate, the hapless Gabita (Laura Vasiliu), wants to be rid of the baby she is carrying; abortion, however, is illegal, and thus, like almost everything in the city, is subject to the vagaries (and the perils) of the black market. So much about this story could have grown gruesome and sensational; instead, even the central deed—performed by the foul-hearted Mr. Bebe (Vlad Ivanov)—is filmed with unerring control. As for Marinca, she draws us ever nearer with her balance of composure and exasperation; how come the Academy took no notice of this actress? In truth, what Mungiu has made is not an abortion picture; it is a study of a system too exhausted to handle love and death. In Romanian.—*A.L.* (1/28/08) (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

IN BRUGES

A rare misfire from the Irish playwright Martin McDonagh, whose short film "Six Shooter" won him an Oscar in 2006. His first full-length movie finds a couple of Irish assassins, Ken (Brendan Gleeson) and Ray (Colin Farrell), hiding out in Bruges, Belgium: hardly an obvious refuge for murderers, although McDonagh could have done more with the sinister peace in which even the prettiest canal city can be enfolded. There is something to savor in the early scenes, as the jovial, cultivated Ken squares off against his more impatient sidekick, and their backchat hits an appealing rhythm. Halfway through, however, the film subsides into a mess, exchanging patter for the less amusing spectacle of bullet wounds and bursting heads. If McDonagh wanted to prove himself more than a wordsmith, this was not the way to go about it. With Ralph Fiennes as the men's employer, the most foulmouthed of the three.—*A.L.* (2/11 & 18/08) (In wide release.)

JUMPER

Doug Liman, who made his name with "Swingers"—low on budget, high on talk—has arrived, a dozen years later, at the opposite. His new movie, though full of galloping special effects, is numb and dumb on the issue of human interaction. After a near-death experience, David Rice (Hayden Christensen) finds himself blessed with the gift of teleportation; he can spirit his body from one place to the next, anywhere in the world. He does this involuntarily at first, then at will, though we are not told what caused the change. He can enter a bank, grab a sack of cash, and beam back to his apartment. He can take an old girlfriend (Rachel Bilson) to Rome for the day, without any clear idea of what to do there. The only glitch is the presence of Roland (Samuel L. Jackson), one of the Paladins—a group dedicated to finding and neutralizing the Jumpers. (Again, we never learn why.) The movie, smartly set up, soon dribbles away; Jamie Bell lends it some energy, in the role of a twitchy fellow-Jumper, but the cameo handed to Diane Lane (as the hero's mother) is an insult. Who could watch this farrago and still maintain that travel broadens the mind?—*A.L.* (2/25/08) (In wide release.)

THE ORPHANAGE

A skillful and destabilizing début from the young Spanish director Juan Antonio Bayona, in collaboration with the screenwriter Sergio G. Sánchez and the producer Guillermo del Toro (whose own films, notably "The Devil's Backbone," are a looming influence here). A happy couple, Laura (Belén Rueda) and Carlos (Fernando Cayo), buy the old orphanage where Laura herself was raised, and plan to reopen it as a home for disabled children. They have a son of their own, who appears to befriend the long-gone inhabitants of the place, as if communing with ghosts. When he disappears, a professional medium (Geraldine Chaplin) is brought in to help with the search; the staging of her séance, under green night-vision light, is designed to stretch and snap the nerves of the hardiest viewer. The movie, however, is more than the sum of its shocks, ripening into a detailed study of childhood anxiety and the extremes of maternal love. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (1/14/08) (In wide release.)

STILL LIFE

A metaphysical ghost-town movie from the Chinese film poet Jia Zhang-ke. The enormous Three Gorges hydroelectric project, damming the Yangtze River, has flooded some of the towns and cities upstream, including Fengjie, where abandoned buildings rot in the summer heat; the only people remaining are the elderly and groups of workmen slowly demolishing the remaining structures with hand tools. The movie chronicles the adventures of two outsiders looking for their mates, who have been working on the project, but the story is intermittent at best. Instead, the movie is a flawless realization of limbo, in which the past has died and the future has yet to arrive. Despite the desolation, it's a beautiful-looking piece of work. From the high banks, the river and the green mountains on both sides of it extend into the distance in majestic panoply; gray clouds hang over the scene like painted backdrops. Jia, working with the cinematographer Yu Wiklai, is incapable of making an ugly or unresonant image: the air seems moist and palpable, and even the thick, rusted pipes of derelict factories appear to breathe. In Mandarin.—*D.D.* (1/21/08) (Cinema Village.)

U2 3D

One of the world's greatest rock bands gets the full 3-D treatment in this fantastic concert film, directed by Catherine Owens and Mark Pellington. Filmed in the course of a week's worth of performances in Buenos Aires during the band's 2006 "Vertigo" tour, the movie features more than a dozen tunes, performed to perfection and infused with the overt, loving excitement of a band that lives for musical transcendence. Owens and Pellington's use of multiple cameras, particularly those placed among the adoring crowds, brings a joyous human element to the show, and the concert has been distilled to a heady eighty-five minutes that showcases some of the greatest work the band has ever done. It may be the best concert film since "Stop Making Sense."—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

VANTAGE POINT

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

VIOLENT SATURDAY

It's a three-headed hybrid: "The Asphalt Jungle" meets "Kings Row," with a touch of "Friendly

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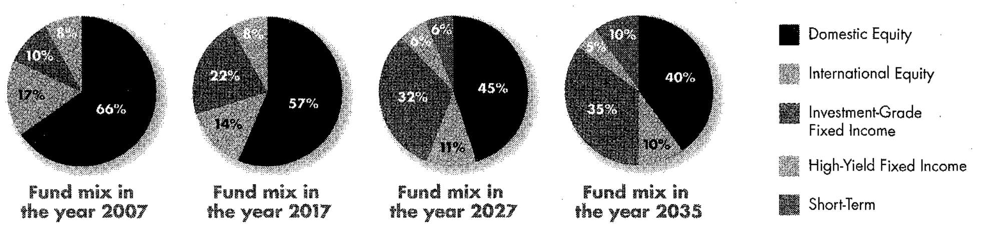
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Persuasion." Stephen McNally, Lee Marvin, and J. Carroll Naish are thieves scheming to rob the bank in the small mining town of Bradenville; Richard Egan is a copper heir with a nymphomaniac wife; Victor Mature is the copper mine's good-guy production manager; and Ernest Borgnine is the Amish farmer outside town who, along with Mature, gets swept into the thieves' escape plan. The movie lacks a core and a camera style, and its treatment of the Amish is thin and rickety. But it's packed with twists and surprises. Marvin proves most unsettling as a hard guy who's always snorting from an inhaler (it's psychosomatic: he once had a wife with a perpetual cold). Mature, with his stricken manliness, reminds you of why James perfectly formed, rapidly delivered sentences. They summarize their emotions rather than living them. Unconsciously, perhaps, Téchiné has produced a portrait of people who are determined to show that, whatever disaster may strike, nothing really gets to them. In French.—*D.D.* (2/4/08) (IFC Center.)

Also Playing

ATONEMENT: In wide release (12/10/07). **JUNO:** In wide release (12/17/07). **MICHAEL CLAYTON:** In wide release (10/8/07). **NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN:** In wide release (11/12/07). **THERE WILL BE BLOOD:** In wide release (12/17/07).

TABLES FOR TWO
FIAMMA

206 Spring St. (212-653-0100)—With its high prices, ambitious cuisine, and faltering service, Fiamma has a bewildering, bubble's-end air. Mishandled decadence can seem cautionary. The knowledge that Fiamma is part of a restaurant company called B. R. Guest prompts speculation about strategy: a foursome dining there one recent not too busy night, next to a table celebrating a woman's admittance to Harvard Business School, decided that Fiamma's existence must have something to do with a strong euro and the proximity of the Soho Grand hotel. During the evening, a bartender attempted to make a Martini without vermouth. Several dishes arrived cold. The paccheri—giant tubes of pasta, with pancetta and lovely strips of *puntarelle*—were, in any country, way undercooked, a parody of al dente, reminiscent of college-era water-to-pasta miscalculations. A bottle of wine showed up twenty minutes after it was ordered, well after the main course had begun to cool, and not for lack of conveyance—the ratio of servers to serving is high here. Coat retrieval was FEMA-like. Is it snotty to grumble about such things? Perhaps, but not when you're paying two hundred bucks a head. Fiamma is all prix fixe; the bottom rung is three courses for eighty-nine dollars. Throw in Barolo, tax, and tip, and, *boink*, you've been Londoned. What needs fixing, it seems, is the process rather than the prix.

Fiamma raises such high hopes. The room is handsome, the greeting solicitous; the menu itself is refreshingly straightforward, while the dishes it describes are provocative and complex. An amuse-bouche arrives: tuna tartare with a tempura beet leaf, an exquisite little thing. The executive chef, Fabio Trabocchi, who came to Fiamma six months ago, is faint of neither heart nor sauce; he lays it on thick, in a manner that, as adoring reviewers have noted, is in some ways more French than Italian. The first course featured a few glimpses of sublime invention: a delicate fleet of carpaccio, in miniature corseted thimble-size portions, like sushi; "la testa," a kind of pork sausage seared and doused in a chestnut-based cream, like sin; roasted lobster with monkfish foie gras. (Monkfish foie gras!) Trabocchi's widely praised lasagna, prepared in the manner of the Italian region of Le Marche (nominally the source region here), somehow simultaneously has the heft of ragù and the airiness of phyllo. Still, an accumulation of little blunders can suck the spirit out of a fancy meal. B. R. Guest? O.K., then, B. R. Host. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays for dinner. Prix fixe $89-$125.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

Agee thought he would be perfect as Diomed in "Troilus and Cressida." Richard Fleischer directed; Sidney Boehm adapted the novel by William Heath. Released in 1955.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Feb. 29-March 6.)

THE WITNESSES

The veteran French director André Téchiné has tried to capture the uneasy moment in Paris when the AIDS virus first hit the city. The year is 1984, and Manu (Johan Libéreau), who's from the South of France, and of North African descent, is a carefree young man living at the center of a sophisticated group of friends—a middle-aged gay doctor, Adrien (Michel Blanc), who makes Manu his protégé without demanding anything from him sexually; the doctor's friend Sarah (Emmanuelle Béart), a rather narcissistic writer of children's books who is looking for a subject for grownup fiction and finally finds one in the young man's life; her husband, Mehdi (Sami Bouajila), a detective on the Paris vice squad who becomes Manu's lover; and Manu's older sister, Julie (Julie Depardieu), an opera performer whose way with Mozart suggests a depth of feeling that the others don't have. The film is highly intelligent, but, despite some furious scenes of temper and bitterness, it has a largely placid bourgeois surface. The older characters all announce their feelings and their opinions of one another in

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Goethe-Institut New York Presents." Feb. 28 at 7:30: "Lina Braake" (1974, Bernard Sinkel; in German). ♦ "Essential Cinema." March 1 at 5:30: "Vampyr" (1931-32, Carl Theodor Dreyer; in Danish, no subtitles). ♦ March 2 at 5: "Day of Wrath" (1943, Dreyer; in Danish, no subtitles).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"A Tribute to IFC Films." Feb. 29 at 7, March 1 at 9:30, March 2 at 9:40, and March 3-4 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "It's a Free World . . ." (2007, Ken Loach). ♦ Feb. 29 at 9:15: "Paranoid Park" (2007, Gus Van Sant). ♦ March 1 at 3:45: "Three Times" (2005, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Mandarin and Taiwanese). ♦ March 1 at 6:30: "Flight of the Red Balloon" (2007, Hou; in French). ♦ March 2 at 2: "Dans Paris" (2006, Christophe Honoré; in French). ♦ March 2 at 4: "A Girl Cut in Two" (2007, Claude Chabrol; in French). ♦ March 2 at 7: "Love Songs" (2007, Honoré; in French).

HONORÉ BROWN

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—The films of Sidney Lumet. Feb. 27 at 1, 4:15, and 7:30: "Long Day's Journey Into Night" (1962). ♦ Feb. 28 at 1, 3:30, and 6: "Daniel" (1983). ♦ Feb. 28 at 8:30: "Prince of the City" (1981). ♦ In revival. Feb. 29-March 1 and March 3-4 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10 and March 2 at 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Violent Saturday" (†). ♦ Special event. March 2 at 1 and 4: "King Kong" (1933, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack). The 1 P.M. screening will be followed by a Fay Wray scream-alike contest.

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through March 25: "James Ivory in Paris." March 4 at 12:30 and 7: "Quartet" (1981; in English and French). ♦ March 4 at 4 and 9: "Mr. and Mrs. Bridge" (1990).

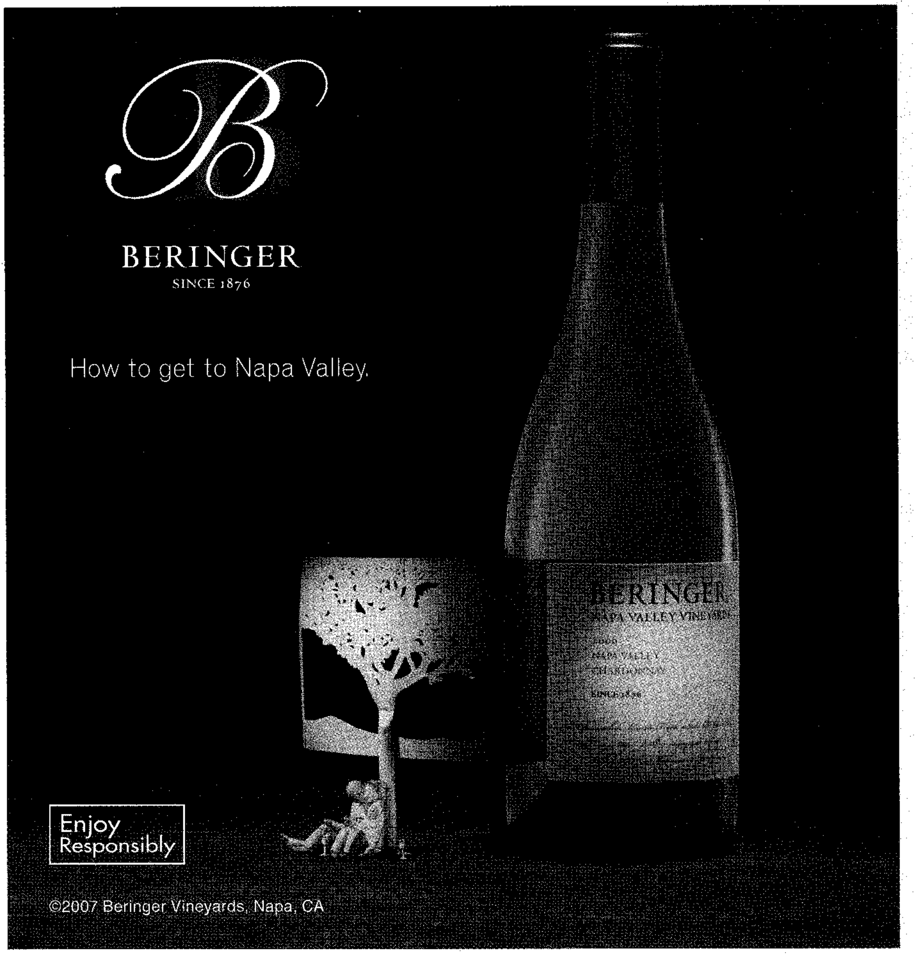
IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The films of Louis Malle. Feb. 29-March 2 at 11 A.M.: "Murmur of the Heart" (1971; in French). ♦ "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema." All films are in French. Feb. 29 at 7:30: "A Secret" (2007, Claude Miller). ♦ March 1 at 1:45: "Those Who Remain" (2008, Anne Le Ny). ♦ March 1 at 3:45: "The Heartbeat Detector" (2007, Nicolas Klotz). ♦ March 1 at 7: "Roman de Gare" (2007, Claude Lelouch). ♦ March 1 at 9:30: "Fear(s) of the Dark" (2008, Blutch et al.). ♦ March 2 at 1: "Let's Dance!" (2007, Noémie Lvovsky). ♦ March 2 at 3:30: "Her Name Is Sabine" (2007, Sandrine Bonnaire). ♦ March 2 at 5:45: "Paris" (2008, Cédric Klapisch). ♦ March 2 at 8:45: "The Feelings Factory" (2007, Jean-Marc Moutout). ♦ March 3 at 7:30: "Love Songs" (2007, Christophe Honoré). ♦ March 4 at 7: "The Grocer's Son" (2008, Eric Guirado). ♦ March 4 at 9:30: "Ain't Scared" (2007, Audrey Estrougo). ♦ Waverly Midnights." Feb. 29-March 1: "Sixteen Candles" (1984, John Hughes).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." Feb. 27-29 at 1:30: "A Bill of Divorcement" (1932, George Cukor). ♦ "Documentary Fortnight." Feb. 28 at 6:30: "Enemies of Happiness" (2006, Eva Mulvad and Anja Al-Erhayem; in English, Farsi, and Pashto). ♦ Feb. 28 at 8: "Run Granny Run" (2007, Marlo Poras). ♦ Feb. 29 at 6: "Shame" (2007, Mohammed Ali Naqvi; in Urdu and Sariki). ♦ Feb. 29 at 8: "Special Leap Year Film Screening." ♦ March 1 at 2: "The Nature of Rebirth" (2007, Johanna Lampi; in Polish and Finnish) and "Black Diamonds" (2006, Catherine Pancake). ♦ March 1 at 5:45: "Exposed" (2005, Heidrun Holzfeind) and "Teeth" (2007, Alice Arnold). ♦ March 1 at 7:30: "To My Great Chagrin: The Unbelievable Story of Brother Theodore" (2007, Jeff Sumerel). ♦ March 2 at 2: "Juvenile Liaison" (1975, Joan Churchill and Nick Broomfield). ♦ March 2 at 5: "Punishment Park" (1971, Peter Watkins). ♦ March 3 at 6: "Soldier Girls" (1981, Churchill and Broomfield). ♦ March 3 at 8: "Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer" (2003, Churchill and Broomfield). ♦ The films of Milos Forman. Feb. 27 at 6: "Man on the Moon" (1999). ♦ Feb. 27 at 8:30: "The Decathlon" (1973) and "Audition" (1963; in Czech). ♦ Feb. 28 at 5:30: "Goya's Ghosts" (2007; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 28 at 8: "Amadeus" (1984). ♦ "The Age of Chevalier." Feb. 29 at 6:15 and March 2 at 2:30: "Uneasy Riders" (1999, Jean-Pierre Sinapi; in French). ♦ Feb. 29 at 8:15 and March 1 at 7:15: "The Wound" (2003, Nicolas Klotz; in English and French). ♦ March 1 at 6: "The Death of Molière" (1994, Robert Wilson; in English, French, Latin, and Greek). ♦ March 2 at 4:45: "Human Resources" (1999, Laurent Cantet; in French).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—"Cabaret Cinema." Feb. 29 at 9:30: "The Dead Zone" (1983, David Cronenberg).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Feb. 29-March 1: "Scarface" (1983, Brian De Palma).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Best Films of 1978." March 2 at 7:30: "Pretty Baby" (Louis Malle). ♦ March 4 at 7:30: "The Last Waltz" (Martin Scorsese).



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WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"*Film Comment* Selects." Feb. 27 at 2:15: "Frontière(s)" (2007, Xavier Gens). ♦ Feb. 27 at 4:30: "Joy Division" (2007, Grant Gee). ♦ Feb. 27 at 6:30: "Inside" (2007, Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo). ♦ Feb. 27 at 8:15 and Feb. 28 at 1: "Dark Matter" (2007, Chen Shi-zheng). ♦ Feb. 28 at 6:30: "Walker" (1987, Alex Cox). ♦ Feb. 28 at 8:30: "Searchers 2.0" (2007, Cox). ♦ "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema." All films are in French. Feb. 29 at 1 and March 1 at 9:15: "Let's Dance!" (2007, Noémie Lvovsky). ♦ Feb. 29 at 3:30 and March 2 at 8:45: "The Heartbeat Detector" (2007, Nicolas Klotz). ♦ Feb. 29 at 6:30 and 9: "Roman de Gare" (2007, Claude Lelouch). ♦ March 1 at 1:30: "Her Name Is Sabine" (2007, Sandrine Bonnaire). ♦ March 1 at 3:45 and March 2 at 6: "A Secret" (2007, Claude Miller). ♦ March 1 at 6:15 and March 4 at 3:15: "Paris" (2008, Cédric Klapisch). ♦ March 2 at 1 and March 4 at 1: "Love Songs" (2007, Christophe Honoré). ♦ March 2 at 3:30: "Ain't Scared" (2007, Audrey Estrougo). ♦ March 4 at 8:45: "The Feelings Factory" (2008, Jean-Marc Moutout).

READINGS AND TALKS

"TENEMENT TALKS"
Amy Goldwasser, the editor of "Red: The Next Generation of American Writers—Teenage Girls—On What Fires Up Their Lives Today," is joined by a number of its local contributors for a reading from the essay collection. (Lower East Side Tenement Museum, 108 Orchard St. 212-982-8420. Feb. 28 at 6:30.)

92ND STREET Y
The rapper and actor Mos Def talks shop (and politics) with the rock journalist Anthony DeCurtis. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 28 at 8.)

"FRENCH LITERATURE IN THE MAKING"
Olivier Barrot, the host of the French literary television show "Un Livre par Jour," interviews the novelist, historian, and Vietnam native Linda Lê. English translation will be provided. (Maison Française, 16 Washington Mews, at University Pl. 212-998-8750. March 3 at 7.)

"HARLEM RENAISSANCE REVISITED"
The poet and novelist John Keene, the interdisciplinary artists Keith and Mendi Obadike, and the poet Evie Shockley turn the spotlight on Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes, Anne Spencer, Richard Bruce Nugent, and others. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. For more information, call 212-431-7920. March 4 at 7.)

THE POWERHOUSE ARENA
Gabrielle Langholtz, the editor of *Edible Brooklyn*, is the host of an evening of readings about food and beverages to benefit Brooklyn's P.S. 107. With Phoebe Damrosch, the author of "Service Included"; David Wondrich, a writer and noted authority on mixed drinks; and Kara Zuaro, whose book, "I Like Food, Food Tastes Good," features recipes from indie rockers. (37 Main St., at Water St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-666-3049. March 4 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"WORKS & PROCESS"
As part of the Guggenheim's performing-arts series, David Helfand, the chair of Columbia University's astronomy department, leads an audio-visual tour through the galaxies. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. March 2 at 7:30.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Christie's offers another edition of "Interiors" (March 4-5), its series of shows in New York, London, and Paris featuring stylish but moderately priced pieces of fine art, furniture, decorations, and design for the eager decorator. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Defined not by period or theme or place of origin, the **"Works on Paper"** fair—in its twentieth year—is an anomaly in the world of auctions and art shows (Feb. 29-March 3). The only unifying element is the material that the works are made on, which allows for an enormous variety of offerings that include drawings, prints, watercolors, photography, books, posters, and architectural renderings. With more than seventy dealers from the U.S. and Europe represented, it's good that some—such as New York's Hill-Stone (Old Master and modern prints) and Paris's Galerie Grillon (etchings and lithographs)—have a narrow focus. A few have chosen to present the work of a single artist: New York's Lori Bookstein Fine Art is showing work by the great architect Louis Kahn, while London's Adam Gallery offers works by the British pastel artist Richard Cartwright. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 67th St. 212-777-5218.)

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ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
VIVAT REX
March 5-24

Rex Harrison is said to have hated the nickname Sexy Rexy, which his infamous philandering earned him, but it didn't prevent him from being taken seriously. MOMA offers a centenary retrospective of some familiar tours de force, including "Major Barbara," "My Fair Lady," and "The Agony and the Ecstasy," as well as four collaborations with Joseph L. Mankiewicz, from "Escape," made in 1948, to "Cleopatra." (212-708-9480.)

NIGHT LIFE
THROWING A PARTY
March 7

The local duo One Ring Zero has long been connected to the city's literary scene. The group celebrates its tenth anniversary at Joe's Pub, accompanied by Jonathan Ames, Las Rubias del Norte, and others. (212-539-8778.)

ART
CURVES AHEAD
March 7-July 6

Rococo got a bad rap during the less-is-more heyday of modernism, but it has survived. The Cooper-Hewitt will survey the highs and lows of the style in "Rococo: The Continuing Curve, 1730-2008." (212-849-8400.)

THE THEATRE
WATERS RUNS DEEP
March 15

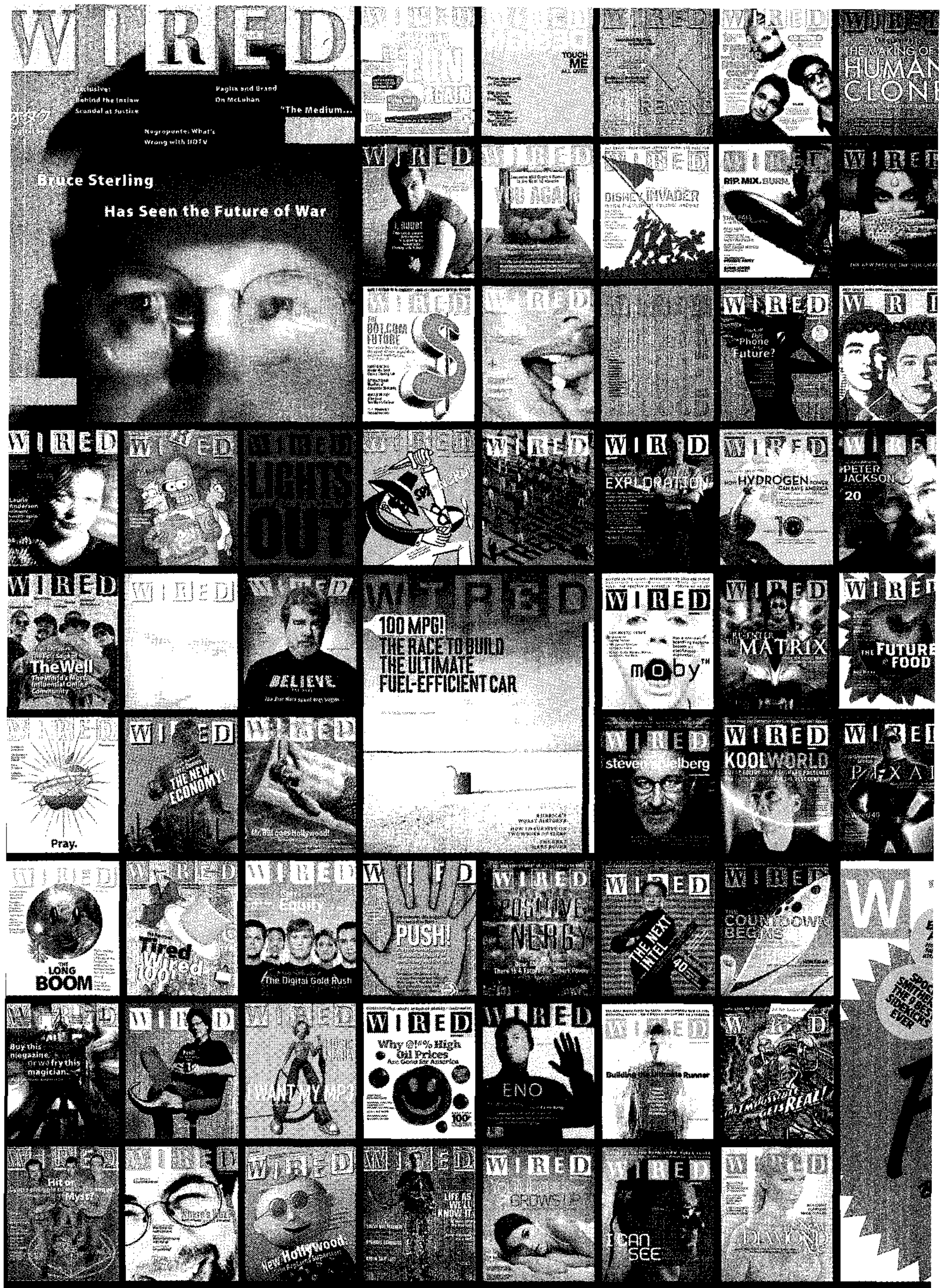
The Broadway musical "Hairspray," adapted from John Waters's 1988 film, will soon be joined by "Cry-Baby," based on his 1990 movie. The book, about a Baltimore rebel who falls for a good girl, is by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehan; the score is by Adam Schlesinger and David Javerbaum. (212-307-4100.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MUTI'S MUSIC
March 27-29

Riccardo Muti may be the embodiment of Continental style at its most refined, but he regularly conducted American music during his years as the music director of the Philharmonic Orchestra. His next concerts with the Philharmonic feature two very grand yet very personal masterworks: Elgar's Violin Concerto (with Pinchas Zukerman) and Copland's Third Symphony. (212-875-5656.)

"Rococo: The Continuing Curve, 1730-2008," at the Cooper-Hewitt.

ULLA PUGGAARD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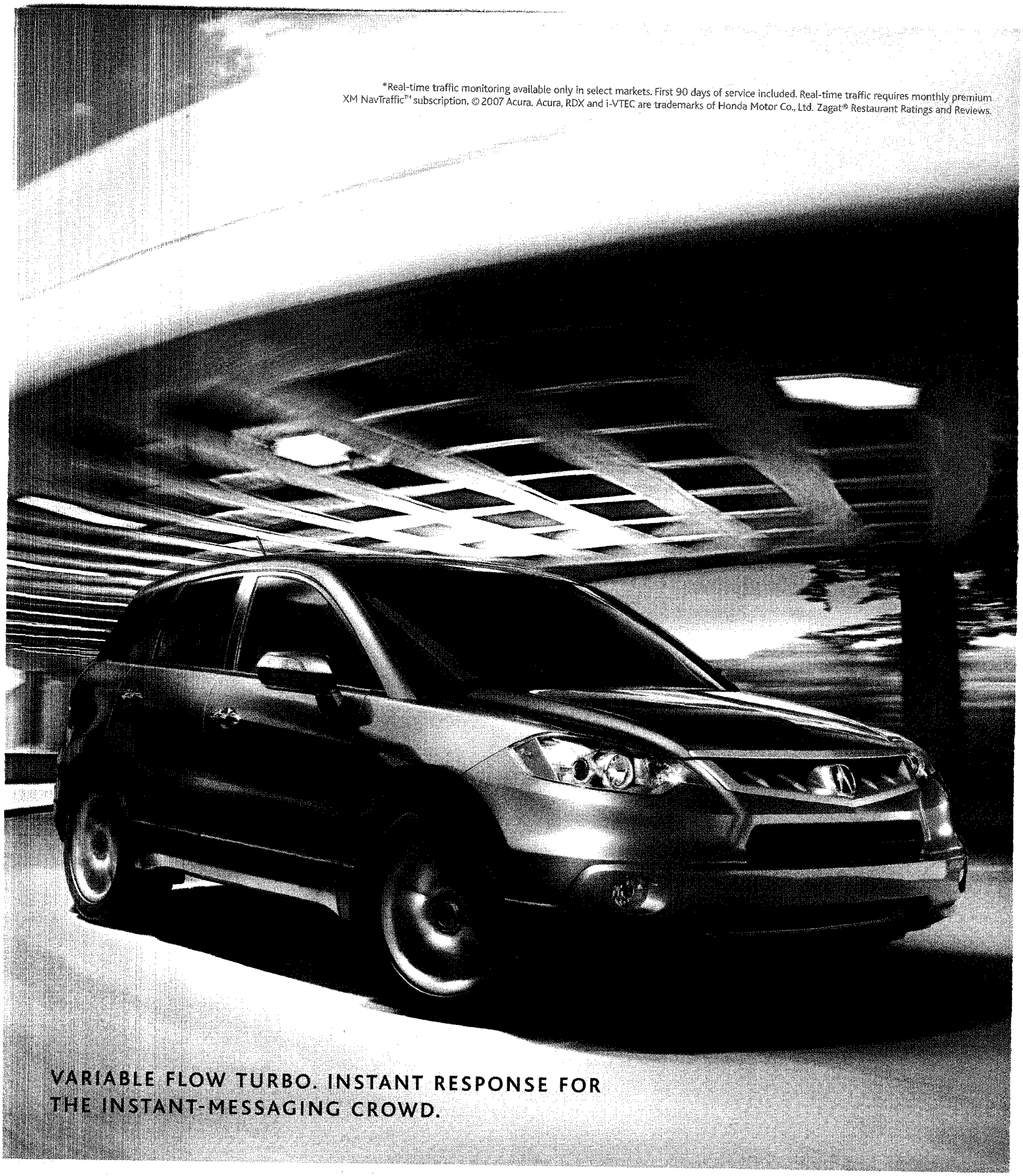
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COMMENT
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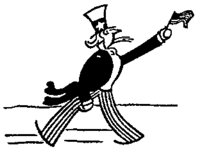
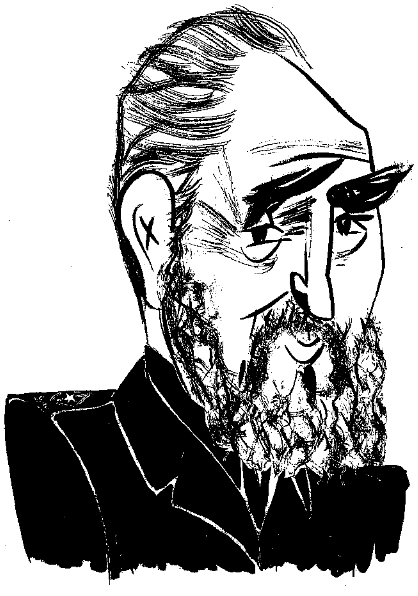


And that it should end so ingloriously! No fighting to the last man at the battlements, no martyr's surrender to an assassin's bullet, only a creaking, shuffling exit through the ward's doors, hospital gown flapping. We are less than a year away from the half-century marker of a most astonishing marathon, but even this artist of endurance must bow to fate and acknowledge that it's time to go. *Vámonos, Fidel:* no one is standing in the way.

So he leaves the field: Fidel Castro Ruz, son of a wealthy Spanish plantation owner and a Cuban washerwoman; rowdy street fighter and student leader; unstoppably audacious politician; revolutionary icon of the lordly profile; self-invented tropical socialist; epic enemy of the United States. In 1953, the extraordinary strength of his conviction persuaded more than a hundred men (and two women) to join him in an attack on one of the dictator Fulgencio Batista's principal military garrisons. Nearly half his men died in the ill-fated attack and its aftermath; he escaped unharmed and emerged a hero. In December, 1956, following a period of imprisonment and exile, he led another improbable attack—this time by sea—against Batista. Again, he lost nearly all his men but survived, along with his kid brother, Raúl, and a scruffy Argentine named Ernesto Guevara. Washington had tired of the unsavory Batista, and it left the dictator to his enemies. On January 8, 1959, Fidel—in Cuba he would forever be known by his first name—entered Havana in triumph, promising Cubans an alternative to what had seemed their inescapable destiny as a Caribbean island. No more whoredom and ruffled cha-cha singers, no more death or blindness for want of simple prescription medicine, no more surrendering smiles for the tourist and the client, no more begging.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

In retrospect, it is astounding how short the period of the revolution's great achievements was. The literacy campaign was completed in 1961; the health-care system and the food-rationing program (which, though loathsome, provided every Cuban with a guaranteed calorie intake) were both in place by 1962. It was all done with Soviet money, but no one else had done it, and the right to an education and a healthy life was more than enough promise for millions of the world's poor, who remained faithful to the idea of Cuba during the decades of the revolution's slo-mo collapse. Housing on the island crumbled; public transportation disintegrated; the sugar industry was destroyed; rationing became a constant form of torture; informing on suspect neighbors was enshrined as an ideal; incorrect thinking or behavior was punished with ostracism and jail; journalism withered; art congealed; and still Cuba's leader found in himself the dramatic resources to embody a dream, a goal, a purpose for an audience the size of the world.



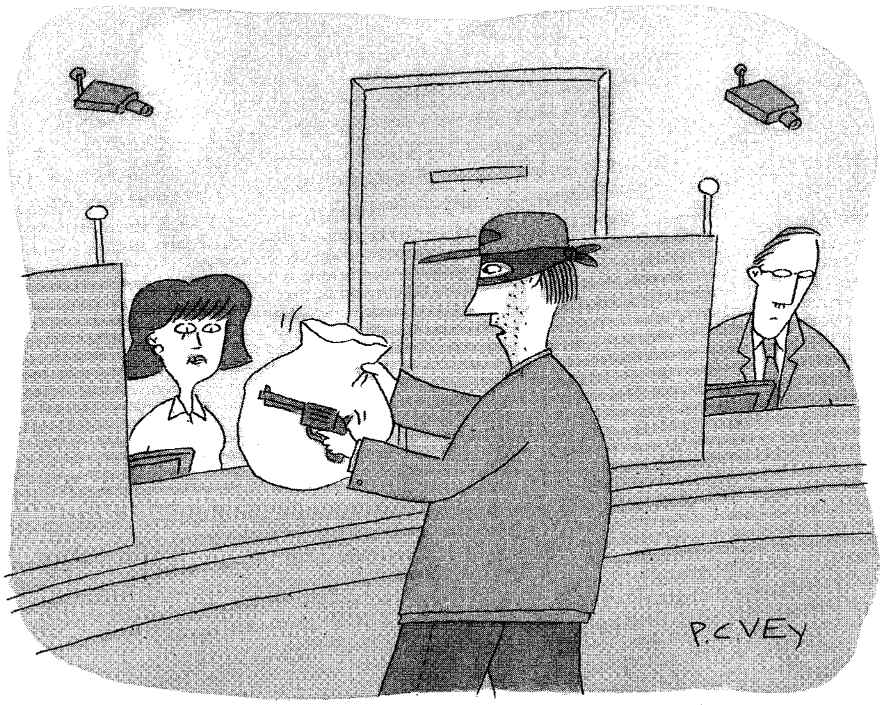
And now what is to come? No one has failed to notice that Fidel's official stand-in, Raúl, is, like his brother, not in the spring of youth. Fidel himself, in his goodbyes last week, implied that it was time to make way for leaders "who were still quite young during the first stage of the revolution." Who is to say how long the new occupants of the many posts he held will stay in power once they have anointed themselves? There is undoubtedly furious conflict within the inner circle, made up of the nomenklatura from the Communist Party and the Revolutionary Armed Forces, about how the delicately choreographed transition is to be managed. At this stage of the transition, however, there does not seem to be any resistance to the idea that change is coming—ideally gradual, probably swift, and necessarily far-reaching.

The words "China model" have been batted around with enthusiasm, but tiny Cuba does not have, among other things, a billion people to provide combustion for an internal market. What Cuba does have, unavoidably and, so far, to its historical misfortune, is the United States, and what the United States does not have is a policy. The mindless trade embargo, imposed in 1962—which inflicts great suffering on a proud people in an attempt to coax them to support U.S. interests—does not qualify. Nine successive Presidents have rubberstamped the embargo; apart from making the island's American-car repairmen world famous, the only effect recently has been to deprive Cubans of cheaper medicines, food, books, industrial equipment, spare parts, communications systems, and reasons to bear Americans good will.

The only other significant U.S. policy initiative with regard to Castro, as he has always been called in this country, was the Bay of Pigs and, like the embargo, it served merely to strengthen the revolution. The Bay of Pigs was a gift worthy of the magi; it allowed Fidel and Raúl, the sempiternal head of the revolution's armed forces, to rout fourteen hundred anti-Castro Cubans, armed and trained by *la CIA* (rhymes with "see ya"), and provided the perfect backdrop against which Fidel could, in the course of the operation, declare Cuba a socialist state. By the time of the Cuban missile crisis, Fidel's armor of defiance had been polished to a high gleam.

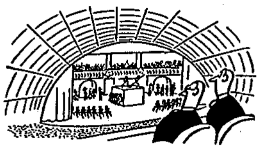
Nearly fifty years on, it is hard to argue that it was ever the desire of the Cuban people to blow up their leader with an exploding cigar or to welcome a proxy invasion. U.S. policy did not encourage a mass revolt against Fidel, even during the years when hundreds of thousands of desperate Cubans risked their lives to flee the island. Today, even his most vehement opposition within Cuba has few illusions that Washington might take an informed, enlightened, non-interventionist, and generous approach to Cuba in the coming transition. And yet there are signs of hope, beginning with Raúl Castro's repeated calls for a conversation with Washington. At the start of last Thursday's Democratic debate, Barack Obama offered to meet with the Cuban leadership without preconditions—a break with the past that his rivals would do well to consider. Imagine that the next President of the United States declares that the embargo will continue until Cubans overthrow their current government. Now imagine that the next President offers non-intervention in Cuba's internal affairs, significant financial assistance for hurricane disaster relief and health care, and helpful mediation in the difficult dialogue that is sure to come between the Florida exile community and the islanders. Which is likely to lead to greater stability in Cuba, and earn America greater good will?

—*Alma Guillermoprieto*



"Don't give me too much, I'm not good with money."

WORDS AND MUSIC
WHEN IN PYONGYANG



With the New York Philharmonic slated to make its Pyongyang début this week, Lorin Maazel, the music director, confessed to some trepidation about the visit. ("I wrote an opera called '1984.' Can that be clearer?") But, some weeks ago, with visions of 1971 Ping-Pong diplomacy in mind, Maazel decided that the concert, which will be broadcast live across North Korea, warranted a few remarks ("introducing music, not talking about North Korean gulags") from the conductor. "It seemed only appropriate, with the North Koreans sitting in the audience and the Americans sitting onstage, that there be some kind of verbal bridge, a 'We're happy to be here and this is what we're playing and hope you enjoy the concert' sort of thing—just by way of breaking the ice," he explained over the phone last week from Hong Kong, where the Philharmonic was halfway through a tour that was to culminate in concerts in both North and South Korea.

Maazel, who speaks French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Russian, but not Korean, didn't want a translator in the middle of his ice-breaking. He resolved to deliver his remarks in Korean, assisted by a trick of his own devising: as he had for an appearance in Japan, he would write a musical score to complement a more conventional phonetic transliteration of his remarks in Korean. "The Japanese people couldn't believe it, because it sounded very authentic," Maazel said, recalling his first experiment with the method. "You know, pitch goes up, drops, gets faster, slower." In much the same manner, his Pyongyang score would cue him on cadence and rhythm and all the other elements of speech that get lost in transliteration and can easily tip the scales between intelligibility and gibberish.

"You can't know these things by looking at the phonetics," Maazel said. "I used to go with my phrase book to small towns in Japan. People would be on the ground laughing so hard, because God knows what I was saying. They knew what I was *trying* to say, obviously. 'Where is such and such a temple,' or whatever. But the pronunciation was all wrong, and I was probably saying, you know, 'The fishmonger is an idiot and ought to be hanged' or something."

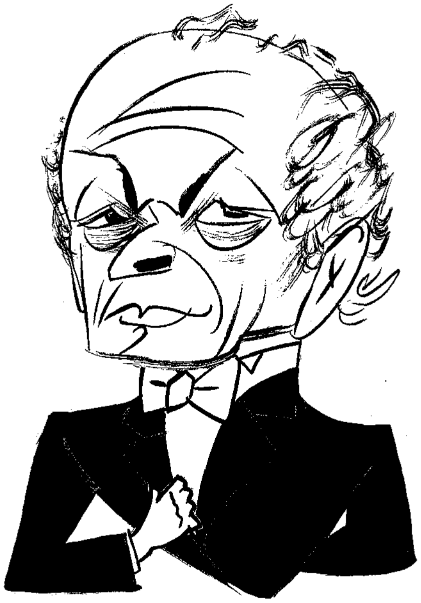
A couple of weeks ago, Maazel had his Pyongyang remarks translated into Korean, and he downloaded a recording of them to his iPhone, then flew to Hong Kong for the start of the tour. In Taipei, he prevailed upon a few Korean-speaking members of the orchestra, foremost among them Michelle Kim, a violinist, to help translate his words into music.

This translation, which Kim and Maazel sketched out on manuscript paper, features a standard five-line staff dotted with a combination of ascending and descending quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, punctuated by accents and breath notes (like commas, signifying pauses). As scores go, it is bare bones (no bass or treble clef, no key, no time signature, no measures, no tempo markings, no dynamics). The English transliteration runs along beneath the staff, like lyrics.

For example: "My colleagues of the New York Philharmonic and I are delighted to have the opportunity to perform in this lovely concert hall" became "*Chung* [quarter note with accent] *joon* [quarter note, same pitch, no accent] *yuruboon* [a pair of sixteenth notes a major third lower, followed by a slower, lower-pitched eighth note, followed by a breath] *Juwa* [accented sixteenth note, unaccented eighth note]."

With one week to go before the big night, Maazel, in Hong Kong, was listening to the speech on his iPhone, and consulting his score at every chance, but finding the task "certainly more awesome" than he expected. (Korean is a tough language for English speakers. The Defense Language Institute rates Mandarin, Japanese, Arabic, and Korean Category IV—the most difficult—languages; a basic course of Category IV study lasts sixty-four weeks, versus twenty-four for, say, Spanish.) "What I try to do is get the musical flow of it in my mind and then put the words to it," Maazel said, sounding tired.

The cramming, alas, was in vain. Four days before the Pyongyang première, it was decided that Maazel would deliver his remarks in English, with a translator relaying them to the North Korean people. Maazel's colleague Douglas Beck wrote in an e-mail that there had been "some concern about whether a North Korean audience would sufficiently understand him, even with all the preparation." He went on, "One of the difficulties on every level of this Pyongyang concert is that there was no prior frame of reference."



Lorin Maazel

But, while the words-to-notes-back-to-words effort had been put aside, the real music was ready to go. "We're doing 'An American in Paris' and the New World Symphony," Maazel said. "The New World Symphony is basically about America," he continued. "'An American in Paris' is about the curiosity Americans have to go to foreign countries. I'm going to say from the stage"—in English, now—"that someday someone will write a piece of music entitled 'Americans in Pyongyang.' " Depending on how that remark goes down, there may or may not be an encore, or two, or three. The orchestra has prepared the Korean folk song "Arirang," Bernstein's Overture to "Candide," and Bizet's "Farandole."

—*Kate Julian*

THE ACADEMY
POWDER ROOM 101

Professor Harvey Molotch arrived for class last Wednesday fresh from a meeting with architects and N.Y.U. administrators about the design for a new home for the school's Department of Social and Cultural Analysis. He was pleased to report that the committee had agreed to build a unisex bathroom. "How radical are we going to be?" he asked, rhetorically. "They've ruled 'No urinals,' but we're not accepting that. It isn't a simple building decision. It's an intellectual decision." Urinals, as one of the students pointed out, save water, among other things. Molotch then passed around a piece of writing by Clara Greed, of the World Toilet Organization (the other W.T.O.), and read aloud a passage about "the restroom revolution which is going on in the Far East."

"Does she use the phrase 'Far East'?" a young woman asked, sounding incredulous. "It's really Western-centric, obviously."

"O.K., so Clara stepped into that one, but she's otherwise good on toilets," Molotch said. He had with him a book of Greed's, "Inclusive Urban Design," that had been covered with a brown paper bag—the better to protect it against unsanitary environments, perhaps. "The book is unabashed," he said. "A better rest room is a better life."

Molotch's course is called "The Urban Toilet," and its remarkable syllabus reads almost like a parody of Allan Bloom's worst nightmare, bringing the jargon of gender and ethnic studies, city planning, and industrial design to bear on the most euphemized of subjects. Consider a few of the texts:

Week 3: Intimate Pollution (Contemporary)
Jo-Anne Bichard, Julienne Hanson and Clara Greed. "Please Wash Your Hands." In *The Senses and Society* Vol. 2 Issue 3 p. 385-390.

Week 7: Race, Class & Gender
Penner, Barbara. (2001b) "A World of Unmentionable Suffering: Women's Public

Conveniences in Victorian London." In *Journal of Design History* Vol. 14, (35-52).

Mitchell Duneier "When You Gotta Go" from *Sidewalk*. NY: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1999.

Week 8: Sexual Spaces

Lee Edelman, "Men's Room" in Joel Sanders (ed). (1996) *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity.* Princeton Papers on Architecture Series. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Some choices were fairly obvious. The title of Alexander Kira's book "The Bathroom" says it all. (Molotch, in his own book, "Where Stuff Comes From," describes it as "an extraordinary ergonomic study of human defecation, urination, and personal hygiene appropriate to the design of bathroom fixtures.") Laud Humphreys's "Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places" was cited frequently in the aftermath of Senator Larry Craig's arrest for solicitation. And Clara Greed is nicknamed Dr. Toilet—a towering figure in the field, however small. ("It's the last frontier of the taboo—where sexuality studies was forty years ago," according to Molotch.) But there is no mention of Duchamp's "Fountain." And who knew that the M.I.T. Press had published a "History of Shit"?

The fourteen students took turns describing their proposed field studies, which ranged from "the idea of the cabdriver: when and how?" to a comparison of Starbucks bathroom use across neighborhoods, and a survey of the people's vision of the ideal commode. Molotch encouraged a varsity athlete to employ an old sociological trick—the "breach experiment"—in the locker room. "It's somewhat addressed in Goffman," he said, referring to Erving Goffman's chapter on "territories of the self," from the segment on Intimate Pollution (Classics), in Week 2. "You just send weirdness through the environment." The student's expression did not suggest enthusiasm for such a challenge.

"There are two reasons to study the rest room, both great," Molotch said. "One is social justice, as you see in Clara Greed, and the other is to understand things that don't have much to do with rest rooms. We've read Barcan"—Ruth Barcan's "Public Toilets as Technologies of Separation and Concealment." On the latter count, a young woman's plan to study bathroom graffiti seemed to hold great promise. She brought up, as an example, the Bleecker Street standby the Bitter End, where the scribbles in the women's stalls tend to be names of couples, and the men's room (or so she's heard) has lately been given over to musings on Ron Paul. Might there be something to the idea of segregated bathrooms, after all?

After class, Molotch said, he was planning on visiting "the club that you all told me about," 49 Grove, in the West Village. But he was concerned that he might not get in. (Molotch is sixty-eight.) "If I tell them, 'I just want to look at your toilets,' I wonder if that'll help or hurt."

—*Ben McGrath*

GIRL STUFF

HAVE GUN

Dana Shafman was at home in Arizona, preparing to visit her cousin Robin Beitman, in Fairfield, Connecticut, when she experienced an anxious moment. Shafman—a dealer in Taser stun guns—was packing up her wares to send ahead, when it hit her that she had put her last gun in the box. "I realized that I couldn't be at home without a Taser," she said. "It becomes something similar to your cell phone. If I leave the house without it, I go into panic mode. It's that safety blanket."

Shafman, who is thirty-four, is the inventor of the Taser party—it's like a Tupperware party, but the women get together to pick out Tasers rather than plastic storage containers. Last week, she hosted her first out-of-state party, at her cousin's in Connecticut. "It's about educating the customer," Shafman explained, as she arranged three Taser C2s—pink, blue, and silver—on a pine coffee table in Beitman's living room, along with coördinating leopard-print pouches. The new model, introduced last year, is, at around three hundred dollars, cheaper than the one wielded by cops, and is about the size and weight of an electric razor—the Virginia Slims of stun guns. "I want people to get comfortable with the product," Shafman said. "I want people to play with them, if they so desire." Behind her, Beitman was putting out snacks: hummus, cookies, grapes, and pink lemonade. (Shafman has a no-alcohol rule where Tasers are involved.) "I'll be honest, when I first heard about this I was torn," Beitman said. "But I actually shot one on Friday, and now I wouldn't hesitate to buy one."

The guests arrived: three young women, all from New York, all in jeans and high heels. (Connecticut is the only state in the tristate area where it's legal to own a Taser.) "Before we start, I want to ask you guys how you're currently protecting yourself," Shafman said. The women were quiet. "I'm embarrassed to say I use my cell phone," one said. "I used to have pepper spray, but it would spray in my bag." Sarah Kreisman, a lawyer, said that she had once taken a self-defense class where she was trained to poke an attacker in the groin and the eyeballs. "Very good," Shafman said. She explained that she has never been attacked, but, then, she has always been vigilant; she kept a baseball bat by her bed in college. "I graduated a couple of years ago to a barbecue knife under my pillow," she said. (Stalkerish ex-boyfriend.)

The women discussed what-if scenarios and rape statistics, and then, one at a time, selected a C2 from the table. Shafman pointed out the gun's sliding safety switch and its built-in flashlight. It comes with a single cartridge, or one shot; a spring-loaded mechanism shoots out two fishhook-like metal probes. The probes are attached to wire filaments: when you pull the trigger, the metal probes are propelled into your attacker's body like darts, creating a closed circuit, and administering up to fifty thousand volts of electricity. (If the darts miss, the Taser itself can still be wielded as a stun gun. "Go for the jugular," Shafman said.)

Shafman had set up a foil-covered target in Beitman's living room, with a silhouette of a man on it. Kreisman tried shooting him. She slid open the safety lock, and the Taser made a rattling sound, indicating that the electricity was running. Then she pressed the trigger: the probes shot out and hit the man-target in the chest. There was a loud *smack!* Blue light twinkled on the tinfoil. "Look how accurate she is!" Shafman said over the guests' oohs and ahs. Police tasers shock people for only five seconds, but the civilian version can send out electricity for up to thirty seconds, presumably giving one a chance to escape. Kreisman pressed the button a few more times, each time creating the frying sound associated with bug zappers, while her friends cheered. "How does that feel?" Shafman asked. "Pretty good," Kreisman said.

"Most people arrive with a fear-based perception of the device," Shafman said, but she added that that changes when they realize that the Taser won't cause injury. She got over her own fear by volunteering to be Tasered at a training facility in Arizona. "I wanted to be shot by my own product," she said. "I was, like, 'Just shoot me.' I did it for three seconds. The trainer was really nice. He gives you a verbal warning— 'Taser! Taser!'—and all of a sudden you hear a *pop*. He shot me in the rear end." Shafman shook her head. "It's just a really intense, harsh pain. It feels like—if you've ever walked on a cold day and felt that little jolt, that static-electricity shock? It's like that, but it goes inside you, into the core of your body. It's the worst pain I've ever felt."

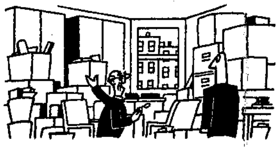
Dana Shafman

Shafman encouraged her guests to take home their spent cartridges as party favors. There was also a photo op: the women posed for pictures aiming their Tasers, Charlie's Angels style. "I look fierce," Kreisman said.

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

RENT

DISLODGING F.S.G.



Joy Isenberg, who has worked at Farrar, Straus & Giroux for thirty-eight years, says that one of the things she is most looking forward to when the company moves this week out of its storied offices, at 19 Union Square West, is the prospect of hot running water in the ladies' room. "You had to put your own hot-water tank in, and that was not something that was in the F.S.G. budget," Isenberg, who is a senior vice-president and director of operations at the company, explained the other day. "The money went into the books, not into painting the walls." Elaine Kramer, the company's longest-serving employee, who was hired in the accounts department in 1952, said that, while the employees were happy about the prospect of improved amenities—there will be a pantry, so for the first time coffee will be made in-house, rather than brought in—many of the writers, over the years, had been attached to the house's primitive living conditions. "Isaac Singer—he liked it that way," Kramer said.

Since November, Isenberg and Kramer, along with more than half of the rest of the staff, have been camping out at the Flatiron Building, in anticipation of the move to new headquarters, on West Eighteenth Street. Late last year, the contents of two of the company's three notoriously cramped and cluttered floors—a casual visitor could be forgiven for assuming that the company, like that of John Harmon in "Our Mutual Friend," was in the dust business, rather than the book one—were sorted and packed up. Among the documentary treasures found were memos, dating from the nineteen-fifties, that gave instructions on procedure in the event of nuclear attack—an event against which even the works of the house's first best-selling author, Gayelord Hauser, who wrote "Look Younger, Live Longer," would offer no protection. There were memos, too, that warned of the repercussions if anyone was found mishandling the mimeograph machine. "It said that, if the machine broke, nine dollars and thirty-seven cents would be deducted from the paycheck of whoever was responsible," Isenberg said.

Also packed up were forty ledger books, weighing between five and nine pounds each, filled with financial records. (Until 1998, Elaine Kramer executed handwritten royalty statements, at which point she reluctantly computerized.) "They were stored in an old-fashioned steel safe—not because anyone would steal them but because that was our fire protection," Isenberg said. These records have been preserved, though employees have been persuaded to trash less important files. "They are actually happy," Isenberg said. "There is a sort of mental cleansing that goes on."

"There was a famous decorator, I think it was Syrie Maugham, who said, 'Throw away, and keep throwing away,'" said Jonathan Galassi, the company's president and publisher, who has been undergoing his own mental cleansing in anticipation of quitting his Wedgwood-blue corner office, overlooking Union Square. More than the space, Galassi explained, he regretted surrendering the address. "You give up part of your identity," he said. "But, as Judy Collins said, there is something lost and something gained."

Galassi's new office will hardly be palatial, though he insists that it will be more than adequate to his needs. "There's no executive bathroom, though I do get a coat closet," he said. "And I think it's going to be fun to be in an office that actually works." He noted that the company's new address, 18 West Eighteenth Street, had a pleasing symmetry. "It is kind of poetic," he said. "It has got a little rhyme."

Roger Straus, the company's founder, died in 2004, before it became clear that rising rents would force the company out, but Galassi felt sure that he would have endorsed the move. "When I was worrying about it, I spoke to Peggy Miller, who had been Roger's assistant, and she said, 'I know exactly what Roger would have done. He would have moved. He wouldn't have spent money on something inessential, like rent.'"

—*Rebecca Mead*

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LETTER FROM LONG ISLAND

THE COLOR OF BLOOD

Race, memory, and a killing in the suburbs.

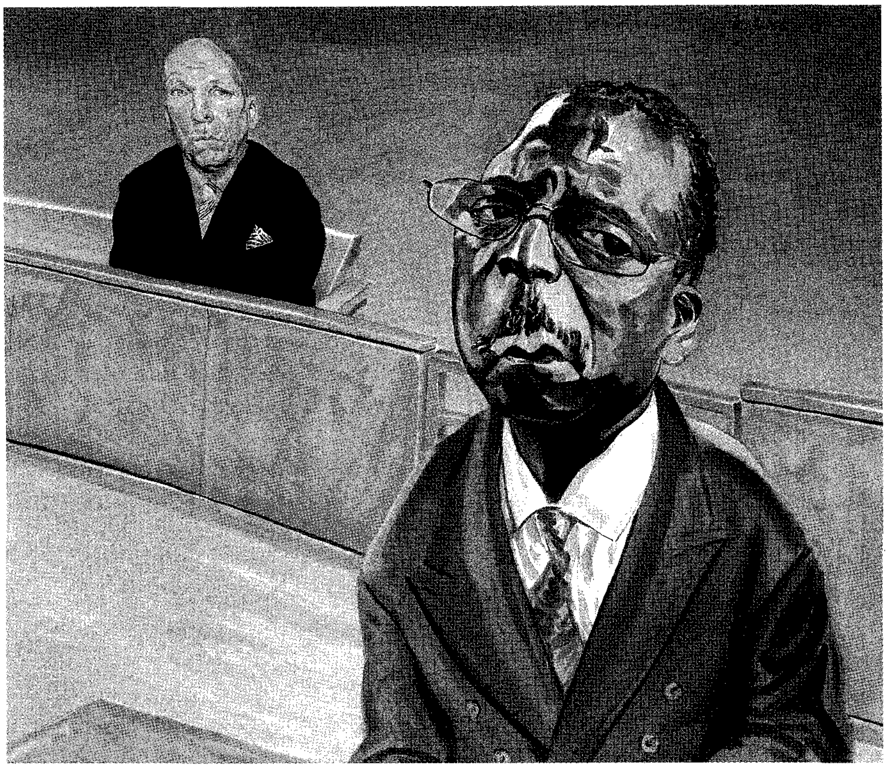
BY CALVIN TRILLIN

What happened at the foot of the driveway at 40 Independence Way that hot August night in 2006 took less than three minutes. The police later managed to time it precisely, using a surveillance camera that points directly at the street from a house a couple of doors to the north. The readout on the surveillance tape said that it was 23:06:11 when two cars whizzed by going south, toward the cul-de-sac at the end of the street. At 23:09:06, the first car passed back in front of the camera, going north. A minute later, a second car passed in the same direction. In the back seat of that second car—a black Mustang Cobra convertible—was a seventeen-year-old boy named Daniel Cicciaro, Jr., known to his friends as Dano. He was unconscious and bleeding profusely. He had been shot through the cheek. A .32-calibre bullet was lodged in his head.

Normally, at that time of night, not many cars are seen on Independence Way, a quiet street in a town called Miller Place. Just east of Port Jefferson, on the North Shore of Long Island, Miller Place is in the part of Suffolk County where the commuters have begun to thin out. To the east is a large swatch of the county that doesn't seem strongly connected to the huge city in one direction or to the high-priced summer resorts and North Fork wineries in the other. The house at 40 Independence Way is part of a development, Talmadge Woods, that five or six years ago was a peach orchard; it's now a collection of substantial two-story, four-bedroom houses that the developer started offering in 2003 for about half a million dollars each. The houses vary in design, but they all have an arched front door topped by the arched glass transom known in the trade as a Palladian window—a way to bring light into the double-height entry hall. When people are asked to describe the neighborhood, they tend to say "upper middle class." The homeowner with the surveillance system is an orthodontist.

Miller Place could also be described as overwhelmingly white. According to a study released a few years ago, Long Island is the single most segregated suburban area in the United States. The residents of 40 Independence Way—John and Sonia White and their youngest son, Aaron—are African-American and so are their next-door neighbors, but the black population of Miller Place is less than one-half of one per cent. The Whites, who began married life in Brooklyn in the early seventies, had moved to Miller Place after ten years in North Babylon, which is forty minutes or so closer to the city. "You want to raise your family in a safe environment," John White, a tall, very thin man in his early fifties, has said, explaining why he was willing to spend three hours a day in his car commuting. "The educational standards are higher. You want to live a comfortable life, which is the American dream." One of the Whites' sons is married, with children of his own, and a second is in college in the South. But Aaron was able to spend his senior year at Miller Place High School, which takes pride in such statistics as how many of its students are in Advanced Placement history courses. Aaron, an erect young man who is likely to say "sir" when addressing one of his elders, graduated in June of 2005. He was one of four black students in the class.

In an area where home maintenance is a priority, 40 Independence Way could hold its own. John White is a serious gardener—a nurturer of daylilies and clematis, a planter of peel-bark birch trees—and someone who had always been proud, maybe even touchy, about his property. People who have been neighbors of the Whites tend to use the word "meticulous" in describing John White; so do people who have worked with him. He has described himself as "a doer"—someone too restless to sit around reading a book or watching television. He says that he's fished from Nova Scotia to the Bahamas. He's done a lot of hunting—a pastime he was taught by his grandfather Napoleon White, whose family's migration from Alabama apparently took place after a murderous attack by the Ku Klux Klan. At the Faith Baptist Church, in Coram, Long Island, John White sang in both the men's choir and the mixed Celebration Choir. A couple of polished-wood tables in the Whites' house were made by him. He's a broadly accomplished man, and proud of it. His wife, who was born in Panama, works as a manager in a department store and has that Caribbean accent which, maybe because it's close to the accent of West Indian nurses, conveys both competence and the firm intention to brook no nonsense. The Whites' furniture tastes lean toward Stickley, Audi. Their sons dress in a style that's preppy. Sitting in his well-appointed family room, John White could be taken for middle management.



John White's trial made two fathers the focus of Suffolk County's racial divide.

PHILIP BURKE

But he doesn't have the sort of education or occupation that would seem to go along with the house he lives in. After graduating from a technical program at Samuel Gompers High School, he worked as an electrician for seven or eight years and then, during a slow time for electricians, he began working in the paving industry. For the past twenty-five years, he has worked for an asphalt company in Queens, patching the potholes left by utility repair crews. He is often described as a foreman, which he once was, but he says that, partly because of an aversion to paperwork, he didn't try to reclaim that job after it evaporated during a reduction in the workforce. ("I'm actually a laborer.") On August 9, 2006, a Wednesday, he had, as usual, awakened at three-thirty in the morning for the drive to Queens, spent the day at work, and, after a stop to pick up some bargain peony plants, returned to what he calls his "dream house" or his "castle." He retired early, so that he could do the same thing the next day. A couple of hours later, according to his testimony, he was awakened by Aaron, who, with a level of terror John White had never heard in his son's voice, shouted, "Dad, these guys are coming here to kill me!" Instead, as it turned out, John White killed Daniel Cicciaro, Jr.

There had been a birthday party that evening for Craig Martin, Jr., a recent Miller Place High School graduate. Craig lives with his parents and his younger sister, Jennifer, in Sound Beach—a town just to the east that grew into a year-round neighborhood from what had begun as beach lots purchased in the twenties as part of a *Daily Mirror* circulation-promotion scheme. The party was mostly in the Martins' back yard, where there was an aboveground pool, a lot of cold beer, and a succession of beer-pong games. This was not the A.P.-history crowd. Craig was connected to a number of the boys at the party through an interest in cars. Some of them were members of the Blackout car club, a loose organization of teen-agers who, in good weather, gather in the parking lot of the Stop & Shop mall in Miller Place on Thursday nights for an informal car show—displaying cars whose lights and windows are likely to have been tinted in pursuit of sleekness. Dano Cicciaro (pronounced Danno Cicero) was a regular at Stop & Shop, driving a white Mustang Mach 1 with two black stripes. Dano had grown up in Selden, a blue-collar town to the south, and finished at Newfield High School there after his family moved in his senior year to one of a half-dozen houses clustered around a cul-de-sac called Old Town Estates, in Port Jefferson Station.

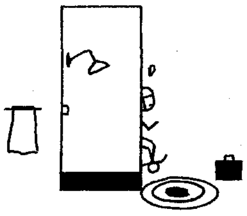
His father, Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., runs an automobile-repair shop in Port Jeff Station called Dano's Auto Clinic—a two-bay operation that also has some used cars parked in its lot, their prices marked on the windshields. Dano's Auto Clinic is where Dano, Jr., spent a lot of his spare time. As a boy, he had the usual range of interests, his father has recalled, but "as he turned into a teen-ager it was all cars." Even as a teen-ager, he ran a car-detailing business out of the shop, and he'd planned to keep that up when he started at Suffolk County Community College in the fall. Dano, Jr.,'s long-term plan was to take over Dano's Auto Clinic someday and expand its services. "He did exactly as I did, in that he set goals for himself and conquered them, never sitting idle," a *Newsday* reporter was told by Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., a father who'd felt the validation of having a son who was eager to follow his calling and work by his side.

Aaron White, who had finished his first year at Suffolk County Community College, was having dinner that evening in Port Jefferson with Michael Longo, his best friend from Miller Place High School. From having attended a few of the Stop & Shop gatherings, Aaron knew some of the car crowd, and, while phoning around for something to do, he learned about the birthday party at the Martins'. Craig greeted Aaron cheerfully enough, but a few minutes later Jennifer, who was then fifteen, told her brother that, because of a past incident, she felt frightened in Aaron's presence. Dano Cicciaro was assigned to ask Aaron to leave. It isn't clear why he was given that task. It couldn't have been his size: Dano was five feet four and weighed a hundred and twenty-nine pounds. It certainly wasn't his sobriety. Dano was drunk. When his blood-alcohol content was checked later at the hospital, it was almost twice the level required to prove intoxication. Still, Dano, who thought of himself as a protective older brother to Jennifer, handled the situation smoothly, saying to Aaron something like "It's nothing personal, but you'll have to leave." Aaron later said that he was puzzled ("I never get kicked out of parties"), but he got into his car and drove back to Miller Place.

When Dano learned exactly why Jennifer felt uncomfortable around Aaron, she later testified, "he freaked out." While in an Internet chat room with a couple of other boys, Jennifer told Dano, Aaron had posted a message saying that he wanted to rape her. Obtaining Aaron's cell-phone number from Michael Longo, Dano touched off what became a series of heated calls involving several people at the party. Dano wanted to confront Aaron immediately. It didn't matter that Aaron denied having posted the message. It didn't matter that the posting had taken place nine months before and that Jennifer's real older brother, Craig, had actually forgotten about it. In court many months later, Jennifer Martin was asked if she'd eventually learned that the offending message had not, in fact, been sent by Aaron—it had grown out of something said on a MySpace account set up in Aaron's name as a prank—and she answered in the affirmative. That didn't matter, either, because by then it was much too late. On the evening of August 9th, when Jennifer told Dano about the rape posting, there were other elements involved. A lot of beer had been consumed. It was late in the evening, a time when the teen-age penchant for melodrama tends to be in full flower. Dano was filled with what Paul Gianelli, one of John White's defense attorneys, called "a warped sense of chivalry" and Dano's godfather, Gregg Sarra, preferred to characterize as "valor, protecting a woman, honor." For whatever reason, Dano Cicciaro and four of his friends were soon heading toward the Whites' house in two beautifully painted and carefully polished cars that passed the orthodontist's surveillance camera when its readout said 23:06:11.

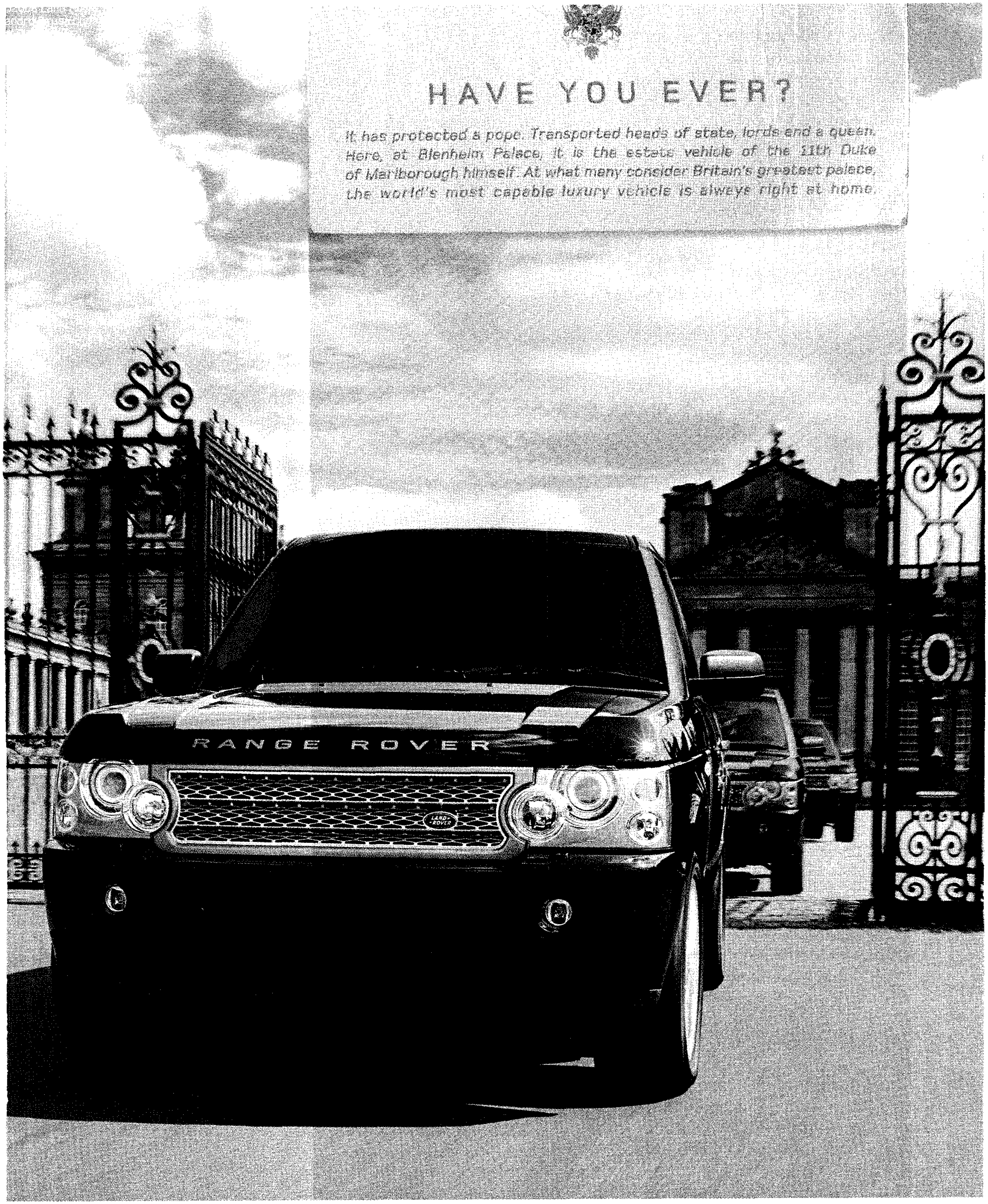
What happened when they got there remains a matter of sharp dispute. There is no doubt that the boys were displaying no weapons when they got out of their cars, although one of them, Joseph Serrano, had brought along a baseball bat that remained in the back seat of the Mustang. There is no doubt that John White emerged from his garage carrying a pre-Second World War Beretta pistol that he kept there—part of an inheritance from his grandfather that had also included, White later said, "rifles and shotguns and a lot of advice." Aaron was a few steps behind him, carrying a 20-gauge shotgun. There is no doubt that Dano "slapped" or "whacked" or "grabbed" the Beretta. There is no doubt that, before the shot was fired, there had been shouting and foul language from both sides. The tenor of the conversation, the defense team eventually maintained, could be surmised from the tape of a 911 line that the boys did not realize was open as they rushed their friend to a Port Jefferson hospital in the black Mustang Cobra. The 911 operator can be heard saying, "Sir . . . hello . . . hello . . . sir, pick up the phone." The boys, their muffled voices almost hysterical, can be heard shouting directions to one another and giving assurances that Dano is still breathing. The operator keeps saying, "Hello . . . sir." Then the voice of Joseph Serrano, sitting in the back seat with his bleeding friend and his baseball bat, comes through clearly: "Fucking niggers! Dano, I'll get 'em for you, Dano."

Back at 40 Independence Way, John White and his son were sitting in front of their house, hugging. Sonia White was screaming, "What happened? What happened?" In the trial testimony and police reports and newspaper accounts and grand-jury minutes dealing with what occurred in the meticulous front yard of 40 Independence Way after the cars had sped away, three statements attributed to John White stand out. One was in the testimony of Officer David Murray, the first Suffolk County policeman to reach the scene, who said that John White approached him with his arms extended, saying, "I did what I had to do. You might as well put the cuffs on me." Another is what Officer Murray said he heard John White say to his son: "I told you those friends of yours would turn on you." The third is what Sonia White testified that her husband said to her as he walked back into their castle: "We lost the house. We lost it all."



A week after the death of Daniel Cicciaro, Jr., several hundred people turned out for his funeral, held at St. Sylvester's Roman Catholic Church, in Medford, Long Island. The gathering was heavy with symbolism. Some of the younger mourners displayed "Dano Jr." tattoos. Dano, Jr.,'s main car was there—the white Mustang that was familiar from Stop & Shop and had won Best Mach 1 Mustang in a competition at McCarville Ford. Gregg Sarra, a boyhood friend of Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., and a local-sports columnist for *Newsday*, gave the eulogy, praising his godson's loyalty and his diligence and his gift for friendship. After the burial, some of Dano, Jr.,'s car-club friends revved their engines and chanted, "Dan-o, Dan-o, Dan-o." As a tribute to his son, Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., attended the service in a Dano's Auto Clinic tank top. The Stop & Shop car show that Thursday, according to a *Newsday* piece, turned into a sort of vigil for Dano, Jr., with Jennifer Martin helping to light a ring of candles—red and white candles, for the colors of Newfield High—around his Mustang and his first car, a Mercedes E55 AMG.

The sadness was accompanied by a good deal of anger. John White found that understandable. "I know how I would feel if someone hurt my kid," he said in a *Times* interview some weeks later. "There wouldn't be a rock left to



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crawl under." Speaking to one reporter, Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., had referred to White as an "animal." For a while after the shooting, Michael Longo—the friend who had accompanied Aaron White to the birthday party and had, as it turned out, telephoned to warn him that there were plans to jump him if he returned—slept with a baseball bat next to his bed. Sonia White later testified that after some particularly menacing instant messages ("i need ur adreass you dumb nigger"), to which Aaron replied in what sounded like a suburban teen-ager's notion of gangster talk ("u da bitch tlaking big n bad like u gonna come down to my crib n do sumthin"), the Whites decided that he was no longer safe in the house, and they sent him to live outside the area.

RAIN LIGHT

All day the stars watch from long ago
my mother said I am going now
when you are alone you will be all right
whether or not you know you will know
look at the old house in the dawn rain
all the flowers are forms of water
the sun reminds them through a white cloud
touches the patchwork spread on the hill
the washed colors of the afterlife
that lived there long before you were born
see how they wake without a question
even though the whole world is burning

—W. S. Merwin

The mourners who talked to reporters after the service rejected the notion, brought up by a lawyer for the White family shortly after the shooting, that Dano Cicciaro and his friends had used racial epithets during the argument in front of 40 Independence Way. Daniel Cicciaro, Sr.—a short man with a shaved head and a Fu Manchu mustache and an assertive manner and a lifelong involvement in martial arts—had called any connection of his son with racism "absurd." But by the time a grand jury met, a month or so after the shooting, even the prosecutor, who would presumably need the boys as witnesses against John White, was saying that racial epithets had indeed been used. The district attorney said, though, that if John White had simply remained in his house and dialled 911, he wouldn't be in any trouble and Daniel Cicciaro, Jr., would still be alive. The grand jury was asked to indict White for murder. Grand juries ordinarily go along with district attorneys, but this one didn't. When the trial finally began, in Riverhead, fifteen months after the shooting, the charge was second-degree manslaughter.

The grand-jury decision may have reflected public opinion in Suffolk County, where there are strong feelings about a homeowner's right to protect his property and his family. Suffolk County is a place where a good number of residents are active or retired law-enforcement officers, and where even a lot of residents who aren't own guns—a place where it is not surprising to come across a plaque that bears the picture of a pistol and the phrase "We Don't Dial 911." James Chalifoux, the assistant district attorney who was assigned to try the case against John White, apparently had that in mind when, during jury selection, he asked jurors if they would be able to distinguish between what might be considered morally right—what could cause you to say, "I might have done the same thing"—and what was permissible under the law. He asked jurors if they could put aside sympathy when they were considering the case—meaning sympathy for John White. Judging by comments posted online in response to *Newsday* articles, public opinion seemed muddled by the conflict between two underpinnings of life in Suffolk County—a devotion to the sanctity of private property, particularly one's home, and an assumption that the owner of the property is white.

Dano's mother—Joanne Cicciaro, a primary-school E.S.L. teacher who had grown up in Suffolk County—said she was extremely disappointed that the grand jury had declined to indict John White for murder. Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., told a reporter, "Here this man points his gun at the boys and says, 'I'm going to shoot.' He says it three times. Then he shoots my son. To me, that's intentional murder." On the other hand, some of White's strongest supporters—people like Lucius Ware, the president of the Eastern Long Island branch of the N.A.A.C.P., and Marie Michel, a black attorney who joined the defense team—believed that if a white homeowner in Miller Place had been confronted late at night by five hostile black teen-agers there would have been, in Marie Michel's words, "no arrests, no indictment, and no trial." The homeowner would have been judged to have had "a well-founded fear," they thought, and if the justice system dealt with the incident in any way it would have been to charge the boys with something like breach of the peace or aggravated harassment ("What were they doing in that neighborhood at that time of night?"). For that matter, these supporters would argue, would Dano have "freaked out" if the male accused of wanting to rape Jenny Martin hadn't been black? Wouldn't teen-agers spoiling for a fight have dispersed if a white father walked out of the house, with or without a gun, and told them in no uncertain terms to go home? In other words, before a word of testimony had been heard, some people attending the trial of John White believed that in a just world he would have been on trial for murder instead of only manslaughter, and some believed that in a just world he wouldn't have been on trial at all.

The Arthur M. Cromarty Court Complex is set apart from Riverhead, the seat of Suffolk County, on a campus that seems to be mostly parking lots—a judicial version of Long Island shopping malls. Those who were there to attend John White's trial, which began just after Thanksgiving, seemed to be roughly separated by race, on opposite sides of the aisle that ran down the center of the courtroom's spectator section. That may have been partly because the room was small and on many days the prosecution's supporters, mostly Cicciaro relatives and young friends of Dano's, nearly filled half of it. Dano, Jr.,'s parents did not sit next to each other—they had separated before their son's death—but they came together as a family in hallway huddles of supporters and in speaking to the press. The people who stood out on their side of the courtroom were a couple of friends of Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., who also had shaved heads, but with modifications that included a scalp tattoo saying "Dano Jr." Although they looked menacing, both of them could be described as designers: one is a detailer, specializing in the fancy painting of motorcycles; the other does graphic design, specializing in sports uniforms.

People on the Cicciaro side might have felt some menace emanating from the phalanx of black men, all of them in suits and ties and many of them offensive-tackle size, who escorted Aaron White (wearing a bulletproof vest) through the courthouse on the first day of his testimony and then took seats across the aisle, near some women from John White's church choir. The escorts were from an organization called 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care. On that first day, their ranks were augmented by members of the Fruit of Islam, wearing their trademark bow ties, although the black leader called to mind by John White's life would probably be Booker T. Washington rather than Louis Farrakhan. As it turned out, there was no overt hostility between those on either side of the courtroom aisle, and, at the end of testimony, the Cicciaros made it clear that they would accept any decision the jury brought in—none of which, Joanne Cicciaro pointed out, would bring their son back. Talking to a *Newsday* reporter after the trial about prejudice, Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., maintained that bias existed toward what some people called skinheads. "Don't judge a book by its cover," he said.

The four boys who accompanied Dano Cicciaro to Aaron White's house that night are all car enthusiasts who now hold jobs that echo their high-school hobby. Alex Delgado does maintenance on race cars. Joseph Serrano is a motorcycle mechanic. Tom Maloney, who drove the Mustang Cobra, sells Volkswagens. Anthony Simeone works for his father's auto-salvage business. Among those who testified that they'd tried to prevent Dano from going to the Whites' house were Alex Delgado, who drove him there, and Joseph Serrano, who brought along a baseball bat. ("He's stubborn," Anthony Simeone had explained to the grand jury. "When he wants to do something, he wants to do it.") Although there had been testimony that Dano Cicciaro used the word "nigger" once or twice in the cell-phone exchange with Aaron White, his friends denied using racial slurs at 40 Independence Way. (With the jury out of the courtroom, Paul Gianelli brought up an incident that had been investigated by the police but not included in the notes and reports that they are required to turn over to the defense: according to two or three witnesses, Daniel Cicciaro had gone to Sayville Ford with a complaint a few weeks before he was shot and, when approached by a black salesman, had said, "I don't talk to niggers." The judge wouldn't admit that into evidence, but the headline of the next day's *Newsday* story was "ATTORNEY: COPS HID MILLER PLACE VICTIM'S RACISM.") The friends who'd gone with Dano, Jr., to the Whites' house that night testified that after John White's gun was slapped away, he raised it again and shot Dano in the face. As they described how Dano Cicciaro fell and how he'd been lifted from the street by Tom Maloney and rushed to the hospital, there were occasional sobs from both Joanne and Daniel Cicciaro.

Dano's friends had said that both of their cars were in the street facing north, but the Whites testified that one was in their driveway, with the lights shining up into the house—a contention that the defense bolstered by analyzing the headlight reflections on the orthodontist's mailbox in the surveillance tape. The boys testified that they'd never set foot on the Whites' property—that contention was bolstered by pictures showing Dano's blood and his cell phone in the street rather than in the driveway—but the Whites claimed that the boys had been advancing toward the house. "They came to my home as if they owned it," Sonia White said on the stand. "What gall!"

John White testified that, believing the young men had come to harm his

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family, he backed them off his property with Napoleon White's old pistol. In the frenzy that followed his abrupt awakening, he said, he had yelled, "Call the cops!" to his wife as he raced into the garage, but she hadn't heard him. He described Dano Cicciaro and his friends as a lynch mob shouting, among other things, "We could take that skinny nigger motherfucker." Recalling that evening, White said, "In my family history, that's how the Klan comes. They pull up to your house, blind you with their lights, burn your house down. That's how they come." In White's telling, the confrontation had seemed over and he was turning to go back into the house when Dano Cicciaro grabbed the gun, causing it to fire. "I didn't mean to shoot this young man," John White said. "This young man was another child of God." This time, it was John White who broke down, and the court had to take a recess. One of the jurors was also wiping away tears.

To convict someone of second-degree manslaughter in the state of New York, the prosecution has to prove that he recklessly caused the death of the victim—"recklessly" being defined as creating a risk so substantial that disregarding it constitutes "a gross deviation from the standard of conduct that a reasonable person would observe"—and that he had no justification. In its decision in the case of Bernard Goetz, the white man who in 1984 shot four young black men who had approached him on the subway demanding money, the New York Court of Appeals, the highest court in the state, ruled that justification could have a subjective as well as an objective component—fears raised by the defendant's past experiences, for instance. By bringing up the history that White's family had with the Klan, the defense team raised a subjective component of justification, along with the objective component of home protection. "We are all products of our past," Paul Gianelli said of his client during one of the breaks in the trial. "He brought to that particular evening who he is." The defense was making a case for, among other things, the power of race memory.

The racial divide is obviously less overt in John White's Long Island than it was in Napoleon White's Alabama. Tom Maloney, who'd also graduated from Miller Place High School, had apparently thought of Aaron White as a friend. Alex Delgado, who drove Dano Cicciaro to Aaron's house on August 9th, had been there before as a guest. In John White's testimony, Delgado was described as Hispanic. Joanne Cicciaro, who by name and appearance and accent might be assumed to have come from one of the many Italian-American families that moved to Suffolk County in recent decades from the boroughs, is actually Puerto Rican—a fact brought up to reporters by the Cicciaros in countering any implications of racism in Dano's upbringing. ("Our family is multicultural.") Even without those complications, the case for race memory would be harder to make to white people than to black people. White people are likely to say that times have changed: these days, after all, a real-estate agent who tried to steer John White away from buying a house in an overwhelmingly white Long Island neighborhood would be risking her license.

If times have changed, black people might ask in response, how come Long Island is still so segregated? In his summation, the prosecutor asked a series of questions as a way to illustrate how White's behavior had deviated from the behavior of a reasonable person. Two of the huge black men who had been part of Aaron White's escort were sitting in the courtroom at the time, and when the D.A. asked whether a reasonable person would really be guided partly by the memory of a Ku Klux Klan attack that happened years before he was born, they both began to nod their heads.

In that closing statement, James Chalifoux said that it wasn't until the trial began that John White started talking about a lynch mob. (It's true that in a newspaper interview in September of 2006 White seemed to downplay race, but it's also true that in his grand-jury testimony, less than a month after the shooting, he spoke about a "lynch mob.") Race, Chalifoux said, was being used to distract the jurors from the simple fact that by walking down the driveway with a loaded pistol John White, a man intimately familiar with firearms, had engaged in conduct that had recklessly caused the death of Dano Cicciaro. Matching up testimony with cell-phone logs, Chalifoux argued that the Whites had more time before the arrival of the cars than their story of a panicky few minutes implied. Chalifoux acknowledged that Dano and his friends were wrong to go to the Whites' that night, that Dano was wrong to use a racial epithet when he phoned Aaron White, and that John White had found himself "in a very bad situation that night and a situation that was not his fault." But how White responded to that situation, Chalifoux said, *was* his fault.

Chalifoux's summation followed that of Frederick K. Brewington, a black attorney, active in black causes on Long Island, who was Paul Gianelli's co-counsel. "Race has so much to do with this case, ladies and gentlemen, that it's painful," Brewington told the jury: Dano Cicciaro and his friends thought they had a right to go to John White's house and "terrorize his family with impunity and arrogance" because of "the false racial privilege they felt empowered by." In Brewington's argument, John White thought, " 'Once they see I have a gun they'll back off' . . . but they did not take 'the skinny old nigger' seriously." While Chalifoux presented Joseph Serrano's slur on the 911 tape as, however deplorable, an indication that the argument at the foot of the driveway didn't include the barrage of insults that the Whites had testified to—if it had, he said, "you would have heard racial epithet after racial epithet after racial epithet"—Brewington saw it as a mirror of the boys' true feelings. "What we do under cover of darkness sometimes comes to light," he said.

Shortly after the beginning of deliberations, ten jurors, including the sole African-American, were prepared to convict John White of having recklessly caused Dano Cicciaro's death. Two jurors resisted that verdict for four days. Then they capitulated. They later told reporters that they felt bullied and pressured by jurors who were impatient to be liberated as Christmas approached. In a courtroom crowded with court officers, the jury reported that it had found John White guilty of manslaughter and a weapons charge. The Cicciaros and their supporters were ecstatic. Dano's parents seemed to take John White's conviction principally as proof that the accusations of racism against their son had been shown to

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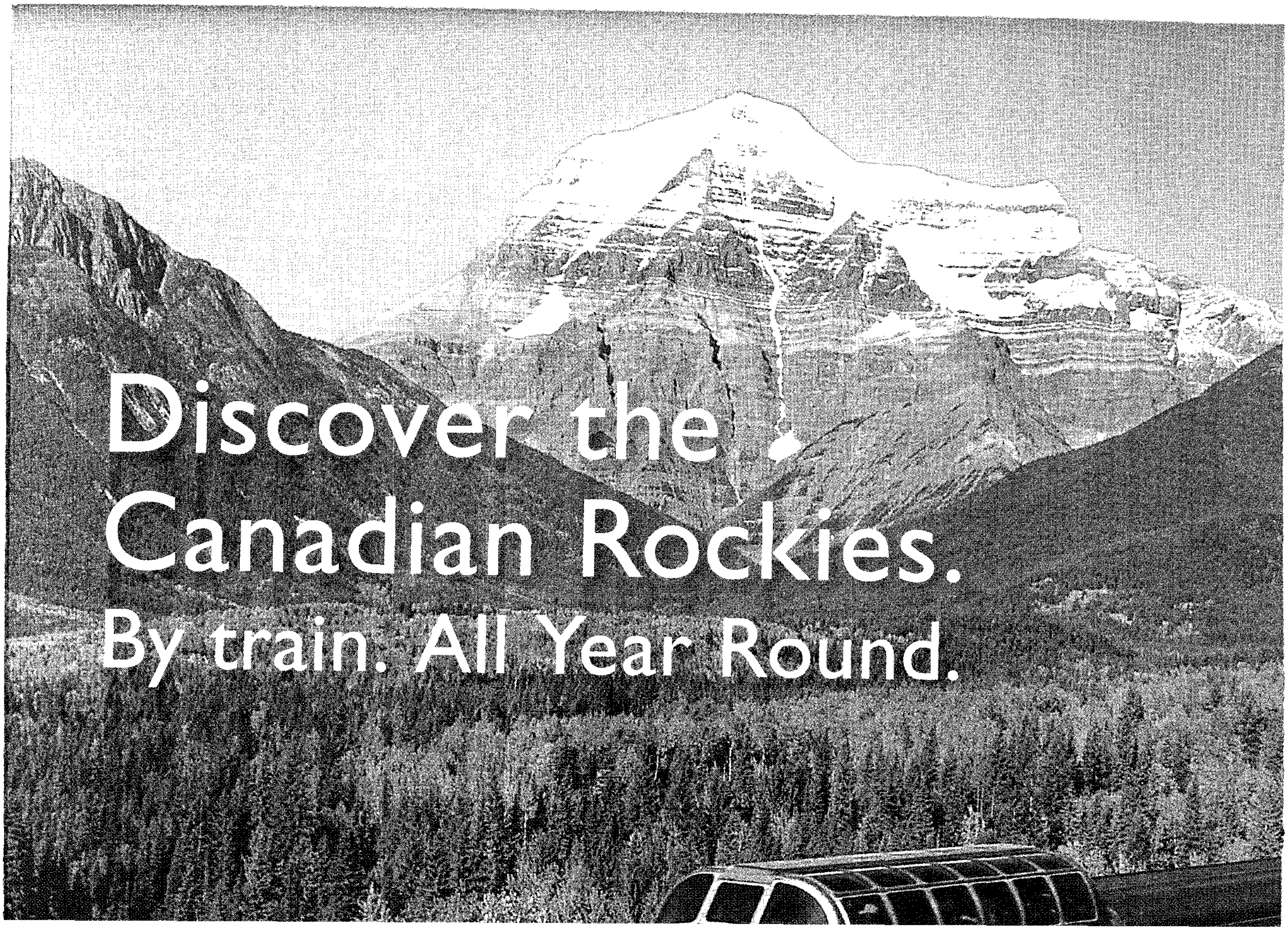
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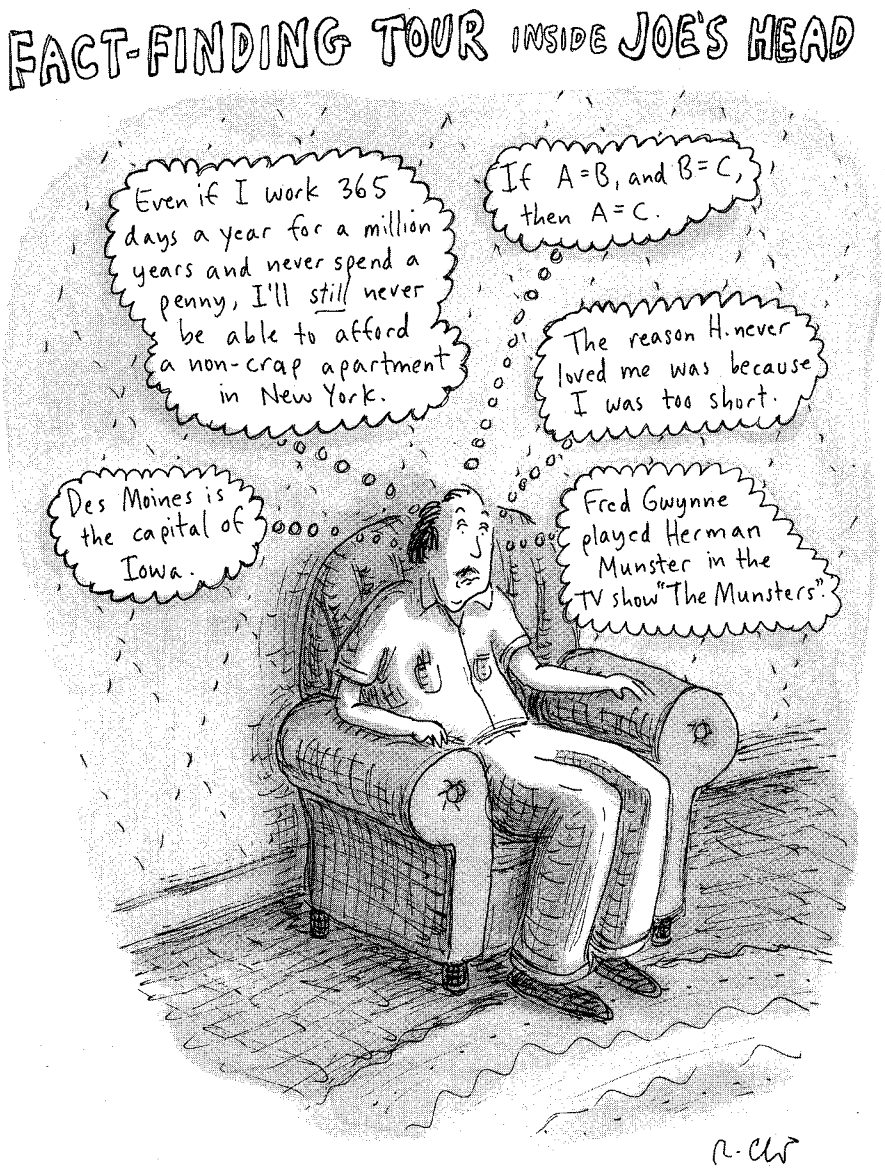
be false. “My son is finally vindicated,” a tearful Joanne Cicciaro said, outside the courtroom. Daniel Cicciaro, Sr., said, “Maybe now they'll stop slinging my son's name and accusing him of all this racism.” Outside the courthouse, friends of Dano, Jr., honked their horns and revved their engines and chanted, “Dan-o, Dan-o, Dan-o.” The next day, Sunday, the celebration continued with a sort of open house at Dano's Auto Clinic, which bore a sign saying “Thank You Jurors. Thank God. Dano Jr. Rest in Peace.” In Miller Place, John White briefly spoke to the reporters who were waiting in front of his house. “I'm not inhuman,” he said. “I have very deep feelings for this young man.” But before that he went to the Faith Baptist Church, in Coram, and sang in the choir.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R. Chast

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“John White is a hero,” Frederick Brewington said two weeks later, addressing a crowd of several hundred people, almost all of them black, who had gathered on a cold Saturday afternoon in front of the criminal-court building in Riverhead. He repeated, “John White is a hero.” The guilty verdict had made White the sort of hero all too familiar in the race memory of African-Americans—someone held up as an example of the unjustly treated black man. On the podium were black office-holders, speakers from the spectrum of black organizations on Long Island, and two people who had come from Manhattan—Kevin Muhammad, of Muhammad Mosque No. 7, and Al Sharpton. A lot of N.A.A.C.P. people were in the audience, and so were a lot of people from Faith Baptist Church. Various speakers demanded a retrial, or called for the resignation of the district attorney, or pointed out the difference in how white homeowners in similar situations have been treated, or called for the young white men involved to be indicted. (“We will raise this to a level of national attention until these young men are brought to justice,” Sharpton said.) There were chants like “No Justice—No Peace” and, loudest of all, “Free John White.”

That chant was not meant literally. For the time being, John White is free—he addressed the rally briefly, mainly to thank his supporters—and his attorneys hope that, while an appeal is pending, he will be allowed to remain free after his sentencing, scheduled for March 19th. (“I think he should get as much time as possible,” a *Post* reporter was told by Jennifer Martin, whose response to Aaron White's arrival at her house set the events of August 9th in motion. “I really do.”) Until the sentencing, White is back to rising at three-thirty every morning to go into the city and patch utility holes. Everything he was quoted as saying in the aftermath of the shooting that night turned out to be true. The fatalism reflected in his statement to Officer Murray as he held out his hands to be cuffed was well founded. Aaron White accepted the fact that those friends of his had indeed turned on him. In his testimony, he said, “They have no respect for me or my family or my mother or my father. . . . They have no respect for life whatsoever. They're scum.” And, of course, John White had understood the situation well when he told his wife that they had lost their dream house—a comment that, as it turned out, particularly incensed Joanne Cicciaro. (His sorrow, she said to reporters after testimony had ended, “was all for themselves—sorrow about losing their house, about their life changing. He never said, ‘Oh, my God! What did I do to that boy? Oh, my God. This kid is bleeding on the driveway. What did I do to him?’ He had no sympathy, no sorrow for shooting a child.”) Even before the trial, 40 Independence Way was listed with a real-estate broker. Its description began, “Stately 2 year young post-modern colonial in prestigious neighborhood.” ♦

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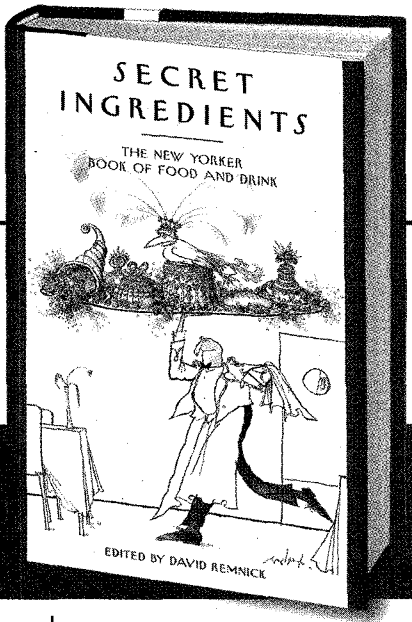

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

HOW THINGS EVEN OUT

BY JACK HANDEY

Things tend to even out. Religion, some people say, has caused wars and fighting. Yes, but it's also boring to sit through a church service, so it evens out. One moment you're depressed because your doctor tells you that you have alcoholism. But then you cheer up when you go home and find a hidden bottle of vodka you had forgotten about.

Things are evening out all the time, if you take time to notice, like I do. Let's say you want a big cupcake, with lots of icing, so you go buy one and eat it. But then you realize, I don't have the cupcake anymore. Or maybe you take a bite of salsa that's labelled "HOT," and it doesn't seem that hot, but then about a second later it seems *really* hot.

You might hear that some guy you know is having a party, so you call him up, but he says there's no party. But then you call back, using a different voice, and suddenly there *is* a party.

One day, you ask people to take a look at a skin rash you have. Then, a few days later, you're looking at *their* rashes. You send someone a death threat and then, mysteriously, the police come to your house and threaten *you*.

Maybe you find a nice flat pebble on a riverbank, and when you pick it up and throw it it skips across the water several times. But then the next pebble you can't even pry loose because, what is this, glue mud? You notice an ant drifting away on a leaf in the water. Then you look up to see your aunt drifting away in a rowboat.

Eventually, I believe, everything evens out. Long ago, an asteroid hit our planet and killed our dinosaurs. But in the future maybe we'll go to another planet and kill their dinosaurs.

Even in the afterlife things probably even out, although I can't imagine how.

Still don't believe that things even out? Try this simple test: flip a coin, over and over again, calling out "Heads!" or "Tails!" after each flip. Half the time people will ask you to please stop.

Once you realize that things even out, it's like a light being turned on in your head, then being turned off, then being turned to "dim."

Probably the perfect example of things evening out happened to me just last month. I was walking to the post office to mail a death threat. It was a beautiful day. I was happily singing away in my super-loud singing voice. I didn't step on any chewing gum, like I usually do, and when I threw my gum down it didn't stick to my fingertips. As I rounded the corner, there was a bum begging for change. I was feeling pretty good, so I gave him a five-dollar bill. At first I tried to make him do a little dance for the five dollars, but he wouldn't do it, so I gave him the five dollars anyway.

Not long after that, I was reading the paper, and there was a picture of the bum. He had won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry! He had a little bigger nose and straighter teeth, but I'm pretty sure it was him. So, my five dollars had made him change his ways and become a chemistry guy.

A few days later, I was walking by the corner again, and there was the bum, back begging. So, things had evened out. He had gotten the Nobel Prize, but now he was a bum again. I asked him for the five dollars back, but he started saying weird stuff that I guess was chemistry formulas or something.

I told my friend Don the story, but he said it wasn't an example of things evening out so much as just a stupid story. That's interesting, Don, because you saying that evens out what I said to your mother that time.

I have a lot of stories about things evening out, but I think the one about the Nobel Prize-winning bum is the best. I'd say it would take about three of my other stories to even out that one. ♦

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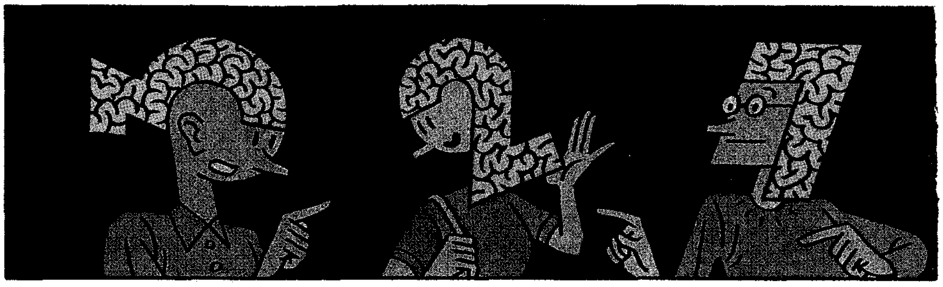
ANNALS OF SCIENCE

NUMBERS GUY

Are our brains wired for math?

BY JIM HOLT

One morning in September, 1989, a former sales representative in his mid-forties entered an examination room with Stanislas Dehaene, a young neuroscientist based in Paris. Three years earlier, the man, whom researchers came to refer to as Mr. N, had sustained a brain hemorrhage that left him with an enormous lesion in the rear half of his left hemisphere. He suffered from severe handicaps: his right arm was in a sling; he couldn't read; and his speech was painfully slow. He had once been married, with two daughters, but was now incapable of leading an independent life and lived with his elderly parents. Dehaene had been invited to see him because his impairments included severe acalculia, a general term for any one of several deficits in number processing. When asked to add 2 and 2, he answered "three." He could still count and recite a sequence like 2, 4, 6, 8, but he was incapable of counting downward from 9, differentiating odd and even numbers, or recognizing the numeral 5 when it was flashed in front of him.



According to Stanislas Dehaene, humans have an inbuilt "number sense" capable of some bas

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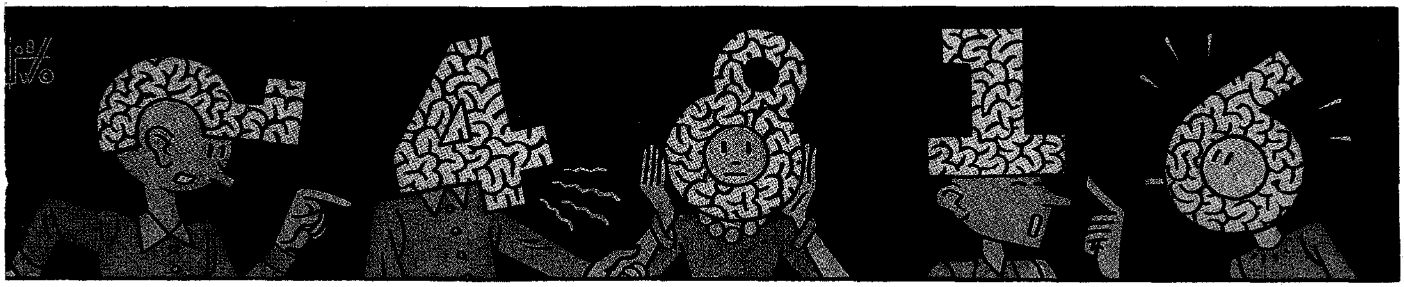
To Dehaene, these impairments were less interesting than the fragmentary capabilities Mr. N had managed to retain. When he was shown the numeral 5 for a few seconds, he knew it was a numeral rather than a letter and, by counting up from 1 until he got to the right integer, he eventually identified it as a 5. He did the same thing when asked the age of his seven-year-old daughter. In the 1997 book "The Number Sense," Dehaene wrote, "He appears to know right from the start what quantities he wishes to express, but reciting the number series seems to be his only means of retrieving the corresponding word."

Dehaene also noticed that although Mr. N could no longer read, he sometimes had an approximate sense of words that were flashed in front of him; when he was shown the word "ham," he said, "It's some kind of meat." Dehaene decided to see if Mr. N still had a similar sense of number. He showed him the numerals 7 and 8. Mr. N was able to answer quickly that 8 was the larger number—far more quickly than if he had had to identify them by counting up to the right quantities. He could also judge whether various numbers were bigger or smaller than 55, slipping up only when they were very close to 55. Dehaene dubbed Mr. N "the Approximate Man." The Approximate Man lived in a world where a year comprised "about 350 days" and an hour "about fifty minutes," where there were five seasons, and where a dozen eggs amounted to "six or ten." Dehaene asked him to add 2 and 2 several times and received answers ranging from three to five. But, he noted, "he never offers a result as absurd as 9."

In cognitive science, incidents of brain damage are nature's experiments. If a lesion knocks out one ability but leaves another intact, it is evidence that they are wired into different neural circuits. In this instance, Dehaene theorized that our ability to learn sophisticated mathematical procedures resided in an entirely different part of the brain from a rougher quantitative sense. Over the decades, evidence concerning cognitive deficits in brain-damaged patients has accumulated, and researchers have concluded that we have a sense of number that is independent of language, memory, and reasoning in general. Within neuroscience, numerical cognition has emerged as a vibrant field, and Dehaene, now in his early forties, has become one of its foremost researchers. His work is "completely pioneering," Susan Carey, a psychology professor at Harvard who has studied numerical cognition, told me. "If you want to make sure the math that children are learning is meaningful, you have to know something about how the brain represents number at the kind of level that Stan is trying to understand."



alculations and estimates. The problems start when we learn mathematics and have to perform procedures that are anything but instinctive.

Dehaene has spent most of his career plotting the contours of our number sense and puzzling over which aspects of our mathematical ability are innate and which are learned, and how the two systems overlap and affect each other. He has approached the problem from every imaginable angle. Working with colleagues both in France and in the United States, he has carried out experiments that probe the way numbers are coded in our minds. He has studied the numerical abilities of animals, of Amazon tribespeople, of top French mathematics students. He has used brain-scanning technology to investigate precisely where in the folds and crevices of the cerebral cortex our numerical faculties are nestled. And he has weighed the extent to which some languages make numbers more difficult than others. His work raises crucial issues about the way mathematics is taught. In Dehaene's view, we are all born with an evolutionarily ancient mathematical instinct. To become numerate, children must capitalize on this instinct, but they must also unlearn certain tendencies that were helpful to our primate ancestors but that clash with skills needed today. And some societies are evidently better than others at getting kids to do this. In both France and the United States, mathematics education is often felt to be in a state of crisis. The math skills of American children fare poorly in comparison with those of their peers in countries like Singapore, South Korea, and Japan. Fixing this state of affairs means grappling with the question that has taken up much of Dehaene's career: What is it about the brain that makes numbers sometimes so easy and sometimes so hard?

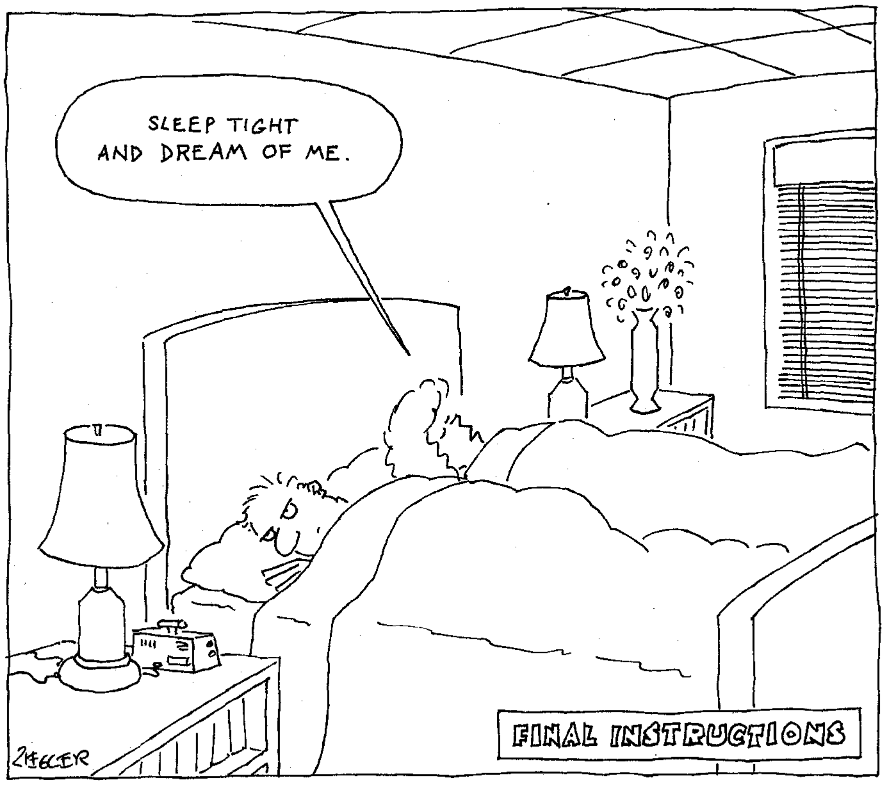
Dehaene's own gifts as a mathematician are considerable. Born in 1965, he grew up in Roubaix, a medium-sized industrial city near France's border with Belgium. (His surname is Flemish.) His father, a pediatrician, was among the first to study fetal alcohol syndrome. As a teenager, Dehaene developed what he calls a "passion" for mathematics, and he attended the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, the training ground for France's scholarly élite. Dehaene's own interests tended toward computer modelling and artificial intelligence. He was drawn to brain science after reading, at the age of eighteen, the 1983 book "Neuronal Man," by Jean-Pierre Changeux, France's most distinguished neurobiologist. Changeux's approach to the brain held out the tantalizing possibility of reconciling psychology with neuroscience. Dehaene met Changeux and began to work with him on abstract models of thinking and memory. He also linked up with the cognitive scientist Jacques Mehler. It was in Mehler's lab that he met his future wife, Ghislaine Lambertz, a researcher in infant cognitive psychology.

By "pure luck," Dehaene recalls, Mehler happened to be doing research on how numbers are understood. This led to Dehaene's first encounter with what he came to characterize as "the number sense." Dehaene's work centered on an apparently simple question: How do we know whether numbers are bigger or smaller than one another? If you are asked to choose which of a pair of Arabic numerals—4 and 7, say—stands for the bigger number, you respond "seven" in a split second, and one might think that any two digits could be compared in the same very brief period of time. Yet in Dehaene's experiments, while subjects answered quickly and accurately when the digits were far apart, like 2 and 9, they slowed down when the digits were closer together, like 5 and 6. Performance also got worse as the digits grew larger: 2 and 3 were much easier to compare than 7 and 8. When Dehaene tested some of the best mathematics students at the École Normale, the students were amazed to find themselves slowing down and making errors when asked whether 8 or 9 was the larger number.

Dehaene conjectured that, when we see numerals or hear number words, our brains automatically map them onto a number line that grows increasingly fuzzy above 3 or 4. He found that no amount of training can change this. "It is a basic structural property of how our brains represent number, not just a lack of facility," he told me.

In 1987, while Dehaene was still a student in Paris, the American cognitive psychologist Michael Posner and colleagues at Washington University in St. Louis published a pioneering paper in the journal *Nature*. Using a scanning technique that can track the flow of blood in the brain, Posner's team had detailed how different areas became active in language processing. Their research was a revelation for Dehaene. "I remember very well sitting and reading this paper, and then debating it with Jacques Mehler, my Ph.D. adviser," he told me. Mehler, whose focus was on determining the abstract organization of cognitive functions, didn't see the point of trying to locate precisely where in the brain things happened, but Dehaene wanted to "bridge the gap," as he put it, between psychology and neurobiology, to find out exactly how the functions of the mind—thought, perception, feeling, will—are realized in the gelatinous three-pound lump of matter in our skulls. Now, thanks to new technologies, it was finally possible to create pictures, however crude, of the brain in the act of thinking. So, after receiving his doctorate, he spent two years studying brain scanning with Posner, who was by then at the University of Oregon, in Eugene. "It was very strange to find that some of the most exciting results of the budding cognitive-neuroscience field were coming out of this small place—the only place where I ever saw sixty-year-old hippies sitting around in tie-dyed shirts!" he said.

Dehaene is a compact, attractive, and genial man; he dresses casually, wears fashionable glasses, and has a glabrous dome of a head, which he protects from the elements with a *chapeau de cowboy*. When I visited him recently, he had just moved into a new laboratory, known as NeuroSpin, on the campus of a national center for nuclear-energy research, a dozen or so miles southwest of Paris. The building, which was completed a year ago, is a modernist composition in glass and metal filled with the ambient hums and whirs and whooshes of brain-scanning equipment, much of which was still being assembled. A series of arches ran along one wall in the form of a giant sine wave; behind each was a concrete vault built to house a liquid-helium-cooled superconducting electromagnet. (In brain imaging, the more powerful the magnetic field, the sharper the picture.) The new brain scanners are expected to show the human cerebral anatomy at a level of detail never before seen, and may reveal subtle anomalies in the brains of people with dyslexia and with dyscalculia, a crippling deficiency in dealing with numbers which, researchers suspect, may be as widespread as dyslexia.



One of the scanners was already up and running. "You don't wear a pacemaker or anything, do you?" Dehaene asked me as we entered a room where two researchers were fiddling with controls. Although the scanner was built to accommodate humans, inside, I could see from the monitor, was a brown rat. Researchers were looking at how its brain reacted to various odors, which were puffed in every so often. Then Dehaene led me upstairs to a spacious gallery where the brain scientists working at NeuroSpin are expected to congregate and share ideas. At the moment, it was empty. "We're hoping for a coffee machine," he said.

Dehaene has become a scanning virtuoso. On returning to France after his time with Posner, he pressed on with the use of imaging technologies to study how the mind processes numbers. The existence of an evolved number ability had long been hypothesized, based on research with animals and infants, and evidence from brain-damaged patients gave clues to where in the brain it might be found. Dehaene set about localizing this facility more precisely and describing its architecture. "In one experiment I particularly liked," he recalled, "we tried to map the whole parietal lobe in a half hour, by having the subject perform functions like moving the eyes and hands, pointing with fingers, grasping an object, engaging in various language tasks, and, of course, making small calculations, like thirteen minus four. We found there was a beautiful geometrical organization to the areas that were activated. The eye movements were at the back, the hand movements were in the middle, grasping was in the front, and so on. And right in the middle, we were able to confirm, was an area that cared about number."

The number area lies deep within a fold in the parietal lobe called the intraparietal sulcus (just behind the crown of the head). But it isn't easy to tell what the neurons there are actually doing. Brain imaging, for all the sophistication of its technology, yields a fairly crude picture of what's going on inside the skull, and the same spot in the brain might light up for two tasks even though different neurons are involved. "Some people believe that psychology is just being replaced by brain imaging, but I don't think that's the case at all," Dehaene said. "We need psychology to refine our idea of what the imagery is going to show us. That's why we do behavioral experiments, see patients. It's the confrontation of all these different methods that creates knowledge."

Dehaene has been able to bring together the experimental and the theoretical sides of his quest, and, on at least one occasion, he has even theorized the existence of a neurological feature whose presence was later confirmed by other researchers. In the early nineteen-nineties, working with Jean-Pierre Changeux, he set out to create a computer model to simulate the way humans and some animals estimate at a glance the number of objects in their environment. In the case of very small numbers, this estimate can be made with almost perfect accuracy, an ability known as "subitizing" (from the Latin word *subitus*, meaning "sudden"). Some psychologists think that subitizing is merely rapid, unconscious counting, but others, Dehaene included, believe that our minds perceive up to three or four objects all at once, without having to mentally "spotlight" them one by one. Getting the computer model to subitize the way humans and animals did was possible, he found, only if he built in "number neurons" tuned to fire with maximum intensity in response to a specific number of objects. His model had, for example, a special four neuron that got particularly excited when the computer was presented with four objects. The model's number neurons were pure theory, but almost a decade later two teams of researchers discovered what seemed to be the real item, in the brains of macaque monkeys that had been trained to do number tasks. The number neurons fired precisely the way Dehaene's model predicted—a vindication of theoretical psychology. "Basically, we can derive the behavioral properties of these neurons from first principles," he told me. "Psychology has become a little more like physics."

But the brain is the product of evolution—a messy, random process—and though the number sense may be lodged in a particular bit of the cerebral cortex, its circuitry seems to be intermingled with the wiring for other mental functions. A few years ago, while analyzing an experiment on number comparisons, Dehaene noticed that subjects performed better with large numbers if they held the response key in their right hand but did better with small numbers if they held the response key in their left hand. Strangely, if the subjects were made to cross their hands, the effect was reversed. The actual hand used to make the response was, it seemed, irrelevant; it was space itself that the subjects unconsciously associated with larger or smaller numbers. Dehaene hypothesizes that the neural circuitry for number and the circuitry for location overlap. He even suspects that this may be why travellers get disoriented entering Terminal 2 of Paris's Charles de Gaulle Airport, where small-numbered gates are on the right and large-numbered gates are on the left. "It's become a whole industry now to see how we associate number to space and space to number," Dehaene said. "And we're finding the association goes very, very deep in the brain."

Last winter, I saw Dehaene in the ornate setting of the Institut de France, across the Seine from the Louvre. There he accepted a prize of a quarter of a million euros from Liliane Bettencourt, whose father created the cosmetics group L'Oréal. In a salon hung with tapestries, Dehaene described his research to a small audience that included a former Prime Minister of France. New techniques of neuroimaging, he explained, promise to reveal how a thought process like calculation unfolds in the brain. This isn't just a matter of pure knowledge, he added. Since the brain's architecture determines the sort of abilities that come naturally to us, a detailed understanding of that architecture should lead to better ways of teaching children mathematics and may help close the educational gap that separates children in the West from those in several Asian countries. The fundamental problem with learning mathematics is that while the number sense may be genetic, exact calculation requires cultural tools—symbols and algorithms—that have been around for only a few thousand years and must therefore be absorbed by areas of the brain that evolved for other purposes. The process is made easier when what we are learning harmonizes with built-in circuitry. If we can't change the architecture of our brains, we can at least adapt our teaching methods to the constraints it imposes.

For nearly two decades, American educators have pushed "reform math," in which children are encouraged to explore their own ways of solving problems. Before reform math, there was the "new math," now widely thought to have been an educational disaster. (In France, it was called *les maths modernes*, and is similarly despised.) The new math was grounded in the theories of the influential Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, who believed that children are born without any sense of number and only gradually build up the concept in a series of developmental stages. Piaget thought that children, until the age of four or five, cannot grasp the simple principle that moving objects around does not affect how many of them there are, and that there was therefore no point in trying to teach them arithmetic before the age of six or seven.

Piaget's view had become standard by the nineteen-fifties, but psychologists have since come to believe that he underrated the arithmetic competence of small children. Six-month-old babies, exposed simultaneously to images of common objects and sequences of drumbeats, consistently gaze longer at the collection of objects that matches the number of drumbeats. By now, it is generally agreed that infants come equipped with a rudimentary ability to perceive and represent number. (The same appears to be true for many kinds of animals, including salamanders, pigeons, raccoons, dolphins, parrots, and monkeys.) And if evolution has equipped us with one way of representing number, embodied in the primitive number sense, culture furnishes two more: numerals and number words. These three modes of thinking about number, Dehaene believes, correspond to distinct areas of the brain. The number sense is lodged in the parietal lobe, the part of the brain that relates to space and location; numerals are dealt with by the visual areas; and number words are processed by the language areas.

Nowhere in all this elaborate brain circuitry, alas, is there the equivalent of the chip found in a five-dollar calculator. This deficiency can make learning that terrible quartet—"Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision," as Lewis Carroll burlesqued them—a chore. It's not so bad at first. Our number sense endows us with a crude feel for addition, so that, even before schooling, children can find simple recipes for adding numbers. If asked to compute 2 + 4, for example, a child might start with the first number and then count upward by the second number: "two, three is one, four is two, five is three, six is four, *six*." But multiplication is another matter. It is an "unnatural practice," Dehaene is fond of saying, and the reason is that our brains are wired the wrong way. Neither intuition nor counting is of much use, and multiplication facts must be stored in the brain verbally, as strings of words. The list of arithmetical facts to be memorized may be short, but it is fiendishly tricky: the same numbers occur over and over, in different orders, with partial overlaps and irrelevant rhymes. (Bilinguals, it has been found, revert to the language they used in school when doing multiplication.) The human memory, unlike that of a computer, has evolved to be associative, which makes it ill-suited to arithmetic, where bits of knowledge must be kept from interfering with one another: if you're trying to retrieve the result of multiplying 7 × 6, the reflex activation of 7 + 6 and 7 × 5 can be disastrous. So multiplication is a double terror: not only is it remote from our intuitive sense of number; it has to be internalized in a form that clashes with the evolved organization of our memory. The result is that when adults multiply single-digit numbers they make mistakes ten to fifteen per cent of the time. For the hardest problems, like 7 × 8, the error rate can exceed twenty-five per cent.

Our inbuilt ineptness when it comes to more complex mathematical processes has led Dehaene to question why we insist on drilling procedures like long division into our children at all. There is, after all, an alternative: the electronic calculator. "Give a calculator to a five-year-old, and you will teach him how to make friends with numbers instead of despising them," he has written. By removing the need to spend hundreds of hours memorizing boring procedures, he says, calculators can free children to concentrate on the meaning of these procedures, which is neglected under the educational status quo. This attitude might make Dehaene sound like a natural ally of educators who advocate reform math, and a natural foe of parents who want their children's math teachers to go "back to basics." But when I asked him about reform math he wasn't especially sympathetic. "The idea that all children are different, and that they need to discover things their own way—I don't buy it at all," he said. "I believe there is one brain organization. We see it in babies, we see it in adults. Basically, with a few variations, we're all travelling on the same road." He admires the mathematics curricula of Asian countries like China and Japan, which provide children with a highly structured experience, anticipating the kind of responses they make at each stage and presenting them with challenges designed to minimize the number of errors. "That's what we're trying to get back to in France," he said. Working with his colleague Anna Wilson, Dehaene has developed a computer game called "The Number Race" to help dyscalculic children. The software is adaptive, detecting the number tasks where the child is shaky and adjusting the level of difficulty to maintain an encouraging success rate of seventy-five per cent.

Despite our shared brain organization, cultural differences in how we handle numbers persist, and they are not confined to the classroom. Evolution may have endowed us with an approximate number line, but it takes a system of symbols to make numbers precise—to "crystallize" them, in Dehaene's metaphor. The Mundurukú, an Amazon tribe that Dehaene and colleagues, notably the linguist Pierre Pica, have studied recently, have words for numbers only up to five. (Their word for five literally means "one hand.") Even these words seem to be merely approximate labels for them: a Mundurukú who is shown three objects will sometimes say there are three, sometimes four. Nevertheless, the Mundurukú have a good numerical intuition. "They know, for example, that fifty plus thirty is going to be larger than sixty," Dehaene said. "Of course, they do not know this verbally and have no way of talking about it. But when we showed them the relevant sets and transformations they immediately got it."

The Mundurukú, it seems, have developed few cultural tools to augment the inborn number sense. Interestingly, the very symbols with which we write down the counting numbers bear the trace of a similar stage. The first three Roman numerals, I, II, and III, were formed by using the symbol for one as many times as necessary; the symbol for four, IV, is not so transparent. The same principle applies to Chinese numerals: the first three consist of one, two, and three horizontal bars, but the fourth takes a different form. Even Arabic numerals follow this logic: 1 is a single vertical bar; 2 and 3 began as two and three horizontal bars tied together for ease of writing. ("That's a beautiful little fact, but I don't think it's coded in our brains any longer," Dehaene observed.)

Today, Arabic numerals are in use pretty much around the world, while the words with which we name numbers naturally differ from language to language. And, as Dehaene and others have noted, these differences are far from trivial. English is cumbersome. There are special words for the numbers from 11 to 19, and for the decades from 20 to 90. This makes counting a challenge for English-speaking children, who are prone to such errors as "twenty-eight, twenty-nine, twenty-ten, twenty-eleven." French is just as bad, with vestigial base-twenty monstrosities, like *quatre-vingt-dix-neuf* ("four twenty ten nine") for 99. Chinese, by contrast, is simplicity itself; its number syntax perfectly mirrors the base-ten form of Arabic numerals, with a minimum of terms. Consequently, the average Chinese four-year-old can count up to forty, whereas American children of the same age struggle to get to fifteen. And the advantages extend to adults. Because Chinese number words are so brief—they take less than a quarter of a second to say, on average, compared with a third of a second for English—the average Chinese speaker has a memory span of nine digits, versus seven digits for English speakers. (Speakers of the marvellously efficient Cantonese dialect, common in Hong Kong, can juggle ten digits in active memory.)

In 2005, Dehaene was elected to the chair in experimental cognitive psychology at the Collège de France, a highly prestigious institution founded by Francis I in 1530. The faculty consists of just fifty-two scholars, and Dehaene is the youngest member. In his inaugural lecture, Dehaene marvelled at the fact that mathematics is simultaneously a product of the human mind and a powerful instrument for discovering the laws by which the human mind operates. He spoke of the confrontation between new technologies like brain imaging and ancient philosophical questions concerning number, space, and time. And he pronounced himself lucky to be living in an era when advances in psychology and neuroimaging are combining to "render visible" the hitherto invisible realm of thought.

For Dehaene, numerical thought is only the beginning of this quest. Recently, he has been pondering how the philosophical problem of consciousness might be approached by the methods of empirical science. Experiments involving subliminal "number priming" show that much of what our mind does with numbers is unconscious, a finding that has led Dehaene to wonder why some mental activity crosses the threshold of awareness and some doesn't. Collaborating with a couple of colleagues, Dehaene has explored the neural basis of what is known as the "global workspace" theory of consciousness, which has elicited keen interest among philosophers. In his version of the theory, information becomes conscious when certain "workspace" neurons broadcast it to many areas of the brain at once, making it simultaneously available for, say, language, memory, perceptual categorization, action-planning, and so on. In other words, consciousness is "cerebral celebrity," as the philosopher Daniel Dennett has described it, or "fame in the brain."

In his office at NeuroSpin, Dehaene described to me how certain extremely long workspace neurons might link far-flung areas of the human brain together into a single pulsating circuit of consciousness. To show me where these areas were, he reached into a closet and pulled out an irregularly shaped baby-blue plaster object, about the size of a softball. "This is my brain!" he announced with evident pleasure. The model that he was holding had been fabricated, he explained, by a rapid-prototyping machine (a sort of three-dimensional printer) from computer data obtained from one of the many MRI scans that he has undergone. He pointed to the little furrow where the number sense was supposed to be situated, and observed that his had a somewhat uncommon shape. Curiously, the computer software had identified Dehaene's brain as an "outlier," so dissimilar are its activation patterns from the human norm. Cradling the pastel-colored lump in his hands, a model of his mind devised by his own mental efforts, Dehaene paused for a moment. Then he smiled and said, "So, I kind of like my brain." ♦

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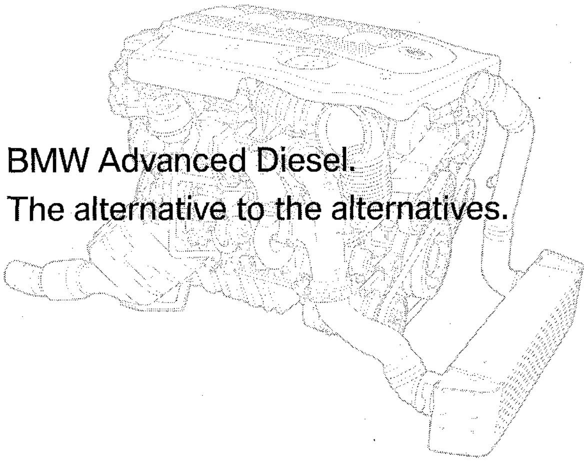

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PERSONAL HISTORY

THE BISHOP'S DAUGHTER

A father, a faith, and a secret.

BY HONOR MOORE

ABOVE: COURTESY THE ARCHIVES OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NEW YORK; RIGHT: MICHAEL O'NEILL

It is Easter, and in the darkness of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine the singing soars in descant, the Gothic ceiling multiplying the clamor. Now, as if a great storm had ceased, there is no music, and in the silence held by three thousand worshippers there come three resounding knocks. And, as we wait, the massive doors swing open, an ethereal shaft of sunlight floods the dark, the roar of the city breaks the gigantic quiet, and there at the far end of the aisle stands the tall figure of a man. My flesh-and-blood father, the bishop.

When I was a child, I accepted my father as a force of imagination that flared and coruscated, an instrument of transformation. During the Second World War, he had survived a Japanese bullet, and he had a scar to prove it. "If my heart had been going this way instead of that," he announced once, rowing me across a lake in the Adirondacks, "you would never have existed!" It was a joke, of course, but it was also the text of a lesson that endured throughout our life together. My father had supernatural powers. His fate had determined my existence. I was something he had made and would continue to make. Physical independence from my parents was one thing—I got too big to hold my mother's hand, too big to ride on my father's shoulders—but it took me decades to escape the enchantment of my father's priesthood.

In the weeks before my father's death, the weather in New York was crystalline. It was April, and the leaves were coming out. There were a couple of days when we thought we could actually see the tiny pale-green nubbles growing as we sat on the stoop of my father's house on Bank Street. "We" were me, my father, and whatever brother or sister was also keeping watch, now that the diagnosis was terminal.

"But what, but what . . ." he said more than once, looking at me as if I knew every answer to every question.

"What, Pop?" I said.

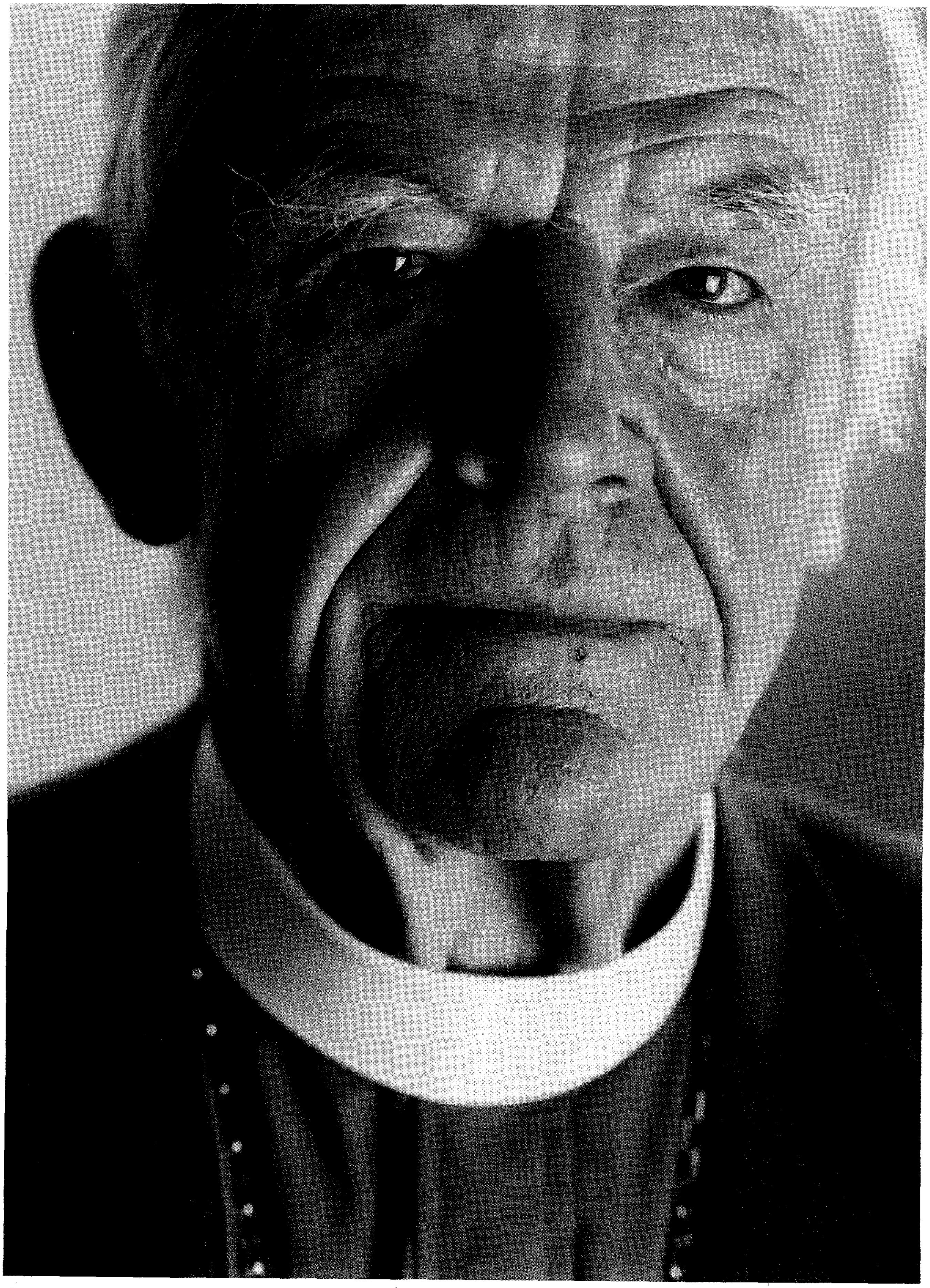
"What's going to . . . happen?" His eyes were very wide.

"What do you think is going to happen?" I would say, and I'd watch him think.

"I think I'll just . . . go to sleep," he'd say.

As April went on, he was less often awake when I got there, and so, after I checked in, I might wander around the Village, to buy flowers for the house, have a cappuccino, just get out. Afternoons were quiet on those intimate streets, and as I walked I could feel my father's love for his life on Bank Street. He had been a fixture there for years, a giant of a man with white hair, tilting from side to side (he had a hip problem), often walking Percy, his tiny Yorkshire terrier. There was a café on the corner, and, directly across the street, a one-story building with tall windows and what looked from the outside like a vaulted ceiling. It housed a hairdresser who seemed always to have the most beautiful and exotic flowers in his salon.

My hair had got too long. There had been no time to have it cut, and now the weather was warm. One afternoon, I went into the shop, gave my name, and asked for an appointment. The man looked at his schedule.



Opposite: Paul Moore with his family on Easter Day, 1958. Above: Moore in retirement in 1997, in Manhattan.

"My father is dying," I said, absurdly.

"Is your father Bishop Moore?"

As he washed my hair later that day, the hairdresser told me that his partner, the man sitting in the front room talking with a friend, the man responsible for the amazing flowers, was a friend of my father's, and had recently stopped him on the street to ask him to have supper. "I'm dying, you know," my father had apparently said. When we moved into the front room, the hairdresser told his partner, "This is Paul Moore's daughter."

"Oh, I know Paul," the partner said.

The hairdresser said, "And you saw him the other day. What was it he said?"

"I'd rather keep it to myself," the partner said abruptly. What was my father's relationship to this man, I wondered. When these men said, "Oh, I know Paul," how did they know him?

When I was a child, and we were living in an inner-city rectory in New Jersey, my father wore civilian clothes only on vacations or when he and my mother went to New York City once a week for their day off. When he dressed like ordinary men, it made me uneasy. I knew what the vestments were for and what his clericals signified. Wearing them, my father was clean and crisp, unsullied by everyday life. But when he wore a tweed jacket and a Brooks Brothers shirt he became someone else—perhaps more like the businessman his parents would have had him become.

My father was born in 1919, the beneficiary of vast wealth. He was a grandson of William H. Moore, who, as one of the Moore brothers of Chicago, had made a fortune in corporate mergers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Until he went away to St. Paul's School, at twelve, my father spent every fall until Christmas at Hollow Hill, a gentleman's farm in New Jersey. He went to a private school in nearby Morristown, and played with friends he kept for a lifetime, taking long walks and riding his horse on the farm's hundred acres, tending his dog and his pet roosters, playing tennis and golf. In January, the family migrated to Palm Beach, where they lived in an Addison Mizner villa, Lake Worth on one side of the house and a wide ocean beach on the other. There, between fishing and boating trips with the captain of his father's yacht and occasional golf with his father, my father was tutored until the family returned home at Easter—to Hollow Hill and to their enormous Manhattan apartment, on the eighteenth floor at 825 Fifth Avenue, which had a view of the sea-lion pond in the Central Park Zoo.

By his fifth form, or junior year, my father was beginning to pray on his own and to ask theological questions. In a diary otherwise marked by adolescent confusion, he is clear and certain when he writes about religion, as when Dr. Drury, the headmaster, gave a "spirited & awfully good sermon." The idea of confession scared him, he told me later, but there was no question that he would be among the boys who made appointments with Father Wigram, a member of a contemplative order founded during the Oxford Movement, when he visited St. Paul's in the fall of my father's final year.

Since I always thought I knew the story of my father's conversion, I never asked him to tell it. But six weeks before he died, at our last dinner out together, I realized I might not have another chance.

"He was a very, very old man," my father said, describing Father Wigram. He emphasized the second "very" just as he would have in telling me a story when I was a child, but now I was a grown-up woman and he himself was a very, very old man, his huge, familiar hands frail but forcefully gripping the table where we sat, in the dark-panelled dining room of the Century Club. It was late October, he told me, and the leaves had fallen from the trees. Father Wigram had arrived and was receiving students.

"So you went into the room?"

"Yes," my father said quietly. "And we talked."

"About what, Pop?"

"Oh," he said, his eyes slowly blinking, "about everything."

As my father told the story, I could see the monk in his black cape and black cassock. My father had heard him preach at chapel and speak in his sacred-studies class, but, nonetheless, when my father knocked on the door he was apprehensive. How could he possibly tell anyone all the terrible things he had done? Why should he tell his sins to a man rather than directly to God? And he was confused, as he wrote at the time, that his "religious emotion" came only "in spells."

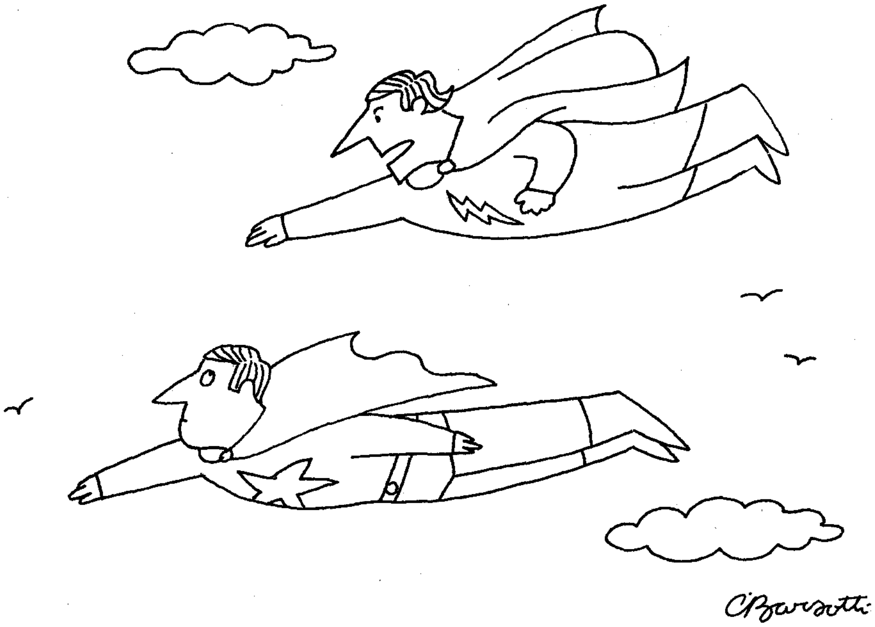
By the end of the summer before his last year at Yale, my father was seriously thinking of making a life in the clergy, and so he had a talk with his father, who

"I can't find that much hair in a drain and not see stress issues."

was unmoved. A young man in his position should take a year or two in business, my grandfather sternly advised, recalling that when he was at Yale, after reading Browning and Tennyson, he'd wanted to become an English teacher, had even written some poems. He'd got over it, as he was sure my father would get over this "ridiculous" idea of the priesthood.

But he didn't, and after he got out of the Marines, in 1945—a hero, with a Silver Star, a Purple Heart, and a Navy Cross, along with scars on his chest and back where that bullet went through him—he made plans to enter seminary, in New York. He had got married a year earlier, to Jenny McKean (the caption of a newspaper photograph of them on a date identified them, in bald summary, as "Marine hero" and "Boston socialite"), and he now had a child; he had returned from overseas less than two weeks after I was born. In fact, it was on board a transport in the Pacific Ocean that my father got a telegram announcing my birth. In his bunk, my father, knowing now that his child was a girl, wrote to his infant daughter, outlining his ideas about men and women and love. "A woman," he wrote, "should know men; not only from her own point of view . . . but also as they are of themselves. Without this understanding, her relationships as sister, daughter, lover or wife, will be inadequate."

Out a window I could see the reddish tower of the seminary chapel from my crib in our New York apartment. Sometimes from my window I would see him, early in the morning, stride across the street and unlock the gate in the seminary wall. In the Gothic buildings, where comings and goings were governed by a bell I could hear from my room, my father was becoming a priest. In the Marines, he had written my mother of his desire to make this life in the Church: "Please help me, darling, to keep alive to what we both must do. I'm so vacillating. So weak." He remembered his convalescent leave, the desolation that could pull him from a night-club table of laughing friends across the room just to say hello to a marine stranger; his need to drink and drink and drink, even though, as he wrote my mother, he considered drunkenness "sinful." Now there was the possibility that all this torment could be swept away, that he himself could be transformed.



"Flying around all day just won't cut it—sooner or later, you're going to have to fight some evil."

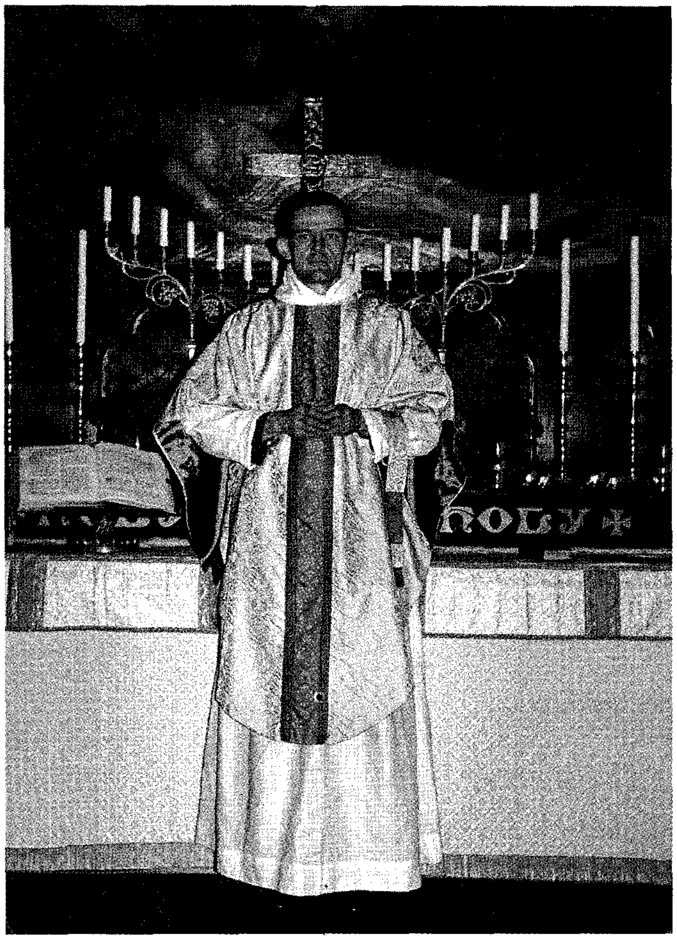
• •

My father was prepared for the excitement of a community of worship—morning prayer that began at 7 A.M. and evening prayer at the end of the day. The revelation was that one made the effort not for one's own "subjective experience" but as "heavy work which you rendered to God as a duty and as a form of thanksgiving day by day." He learned to withstand the ebbs and flows of his faith. As he had been at St. Paul's, my father was part of a community of men which was virtually monastic. Unlike at Yale, where he was constantly striving to prove himself and partying to relieve the stress, or in the Marines, where the requirements of his being an officer held him apart, he was one of many, a seminarian among seminarians.

Once, after supper, my father swept me up into his black seminarian's cape and across the street for Evensong. I remember the starry sky, the cold darkness as we climbed the stairs to the seminary and stepped along the grassy path to the chapel. I could already hear it, something like the rushing of wind, the coming of a storm. We were late, and as we slipped into the pew in the candlelit church full of men I understood that the rushing sound was singing. The rumbling voices of priests and seminarians, resounding against the stone walls of the small chapel, were otherworldly, even Godlike. I was scared, and so I leaned against my father, nuzzling the black cape still fresh from the night air, but he didn't look down at me or put his hand on my head. Now he belonged to something else, this big and strange sound, so deep and loud it made me shake. I could hardly breathe as all the men together spoke words I couldn't yet understand. *And with thy spirit. Ah-men. Alleluia.*

After that night, I looked at my father with new curiosity. He was no longer different from my mother just because he was the father and she wasn't. He was in touch with something that couldn't be seen but that was also real. When he left our apartment, he visited a place where utterance had a use beyond ordinary talk, was something frightening and beautiful. Across the street in the dark, inside the reddish tower, in the honey light of the candles, was a landscape like a dream, a place to which my father belonged and from which my mother and I were excluded.

His first parish, where we moved in the summer of 1949, was in lower Jersey City, a gritty neighborhood blocks from where "On the Waterfront" was filmed, four years later. Paul Moore—whose older brother was then an executive vice-president of Bankers Trust, on his way to the chairmanship—found himself in a team ministry that included two other priests and his wife, pregnant with their third child, residing in an "open rectory." They had chosen to work with the poor. Men with nowhere else to go and breath thick with whiskey sipped my mother's homemade soup on the front porch. Families burned out of their apartments outfitted themselves in the "clothes room" in the basement, leaving a child or two to stay with us until the church helped them find a new apartment. The ministry's understanding, innovative at the time, of what it meant to be a Christian in a modern city led to political and social action on behalf of parishioners who were evicted, jailed, or excluded from illegally segregated federal housing projects.



Paul Moore in his first parish, in Jersey City, around 1955.

FAMILY COLLECTION

I remember a Christmas Eve—let's say it's when I'm first allowed to go to midnight Mass. My father climbs the pulpit and says, "Merry Christmas," which is strange since it's something he would also say outside church, and this raises laughs in the congregation. And then, as he begins to speak as a priest, his tone changes and he is preaching. Tonight, the sermon is just like a story: Mary is pregnant and lives with Joseph, her husband, right near here, but because he has lost his job they are without a home, and because they are black the motel has turned them away. They are cold and afraid and her time is near as they walk the dark, empty streets until they see a garage, its door ajar. There Joseph finds an old kerosene lantern and a heater in the corner—and a few pasteboard boxes and some rags, blackened with motor oil. Stretching out his long arms, my father tenderly describes Joseph's settling Mary onto a pile of those rags, and he looks down at us, and then, lifting his face, he says, emphasizing certain words, "And as a bright *star* appeared in the *sky*, the baby was *born*. Jesus was born." And, he continues, "the *Christ child* was laid in a box of those rags, by the light of the strange old railroad lantern."

I could see Mary and Joseph—I could see the shadowy, cold garage, the kerosene lantern, the heater. My father was both someone else entirely and just as I knew him; and the story seemed completely true, happening right here in the neighborhood where we lived. I understood miracles—my mother read me the lives of saints, of martyrs, and my father had told the story of St. Christopher, who carried a child across a river, the child's weight growing heavier and heavier until Christopher could hardly walk, terrified he might stumble. But he did not stumble or allow the child on his shoulders to fall into the turbulent current, and when he reached the opposite shore the child leaped from his shoulders and, standing there in the darkness, was suddenly illuminated, revealed as the Christ child. This Christmas night it seemed that my father, by telling the Nativity story in a new way, had himself created a kind of miracle. He had made me see and smell and feel it. When I told him how much I liked his sermon, he looked down at me and smiled.

My father's extreme height—he was almost six feet five—made him seem even more distant than he might have had he been of ordinary dimensions. I thought his tallness had to do with the brocades he wore, with the music, the candles, and the gold crosses that preceded him when he walked down the aisle; that it rendered him closer to God than those of ordinary height and therefore closer to enchantment. The place where my father changed out of his day clothes was called the sacristy, and when we lived in Jersey City he took me there once, down a narrow hallway. It was a small, silent room, all dark wood that gleamed silkily in the parchment-yellow light. There were closets that opened like gates and shallow drawers that pulled out evenly, with a sound like exhalation. The warm air smelled like wax, bitter and smooth, and as I breathed it I began to forget the color of daylight. Here my father spoke to me in a grave voice, and familiar things had other names. Getting dressed was "vesting," a scarf was a "stole," and the black, sculpted hats were "birettas." In the sacristy that evening, one of the other priests, a man who lived with us, looked at me with different eyes, as if he did not know me, and quietly folded his vestments. The boys who teased me when we played handball, now vesting as acolytes, were quiet in front of my father, and so I bowed my head and didn't look at them.

My father showed me what incense looked like, and where you put it in the brass censer, which looked like a lantern with holes in it. He showed me the ciborium, the round silver vessel in which the bread was kept, white wafers that came to be called "the Host" when he blessed them. He put on a cassock, buttoning it from his neck down to his ankles, and opened a tall narrow door to pull out a cotta, a white, gathered garment with sleeves like wings. Hanging there were smaller cottas for the acolytes and more long cassocks, black for ordinary Sundays and red for festivals. In another closet were the gleaming brass crosses and candlesticks on long poles and fat creamy candles and a crucifix that was real gold, with a gold Jesus on it; and in a small cupboard with a caged door and a brass lock were Communion vessels—silver chalices and silver plates, kept separate, I thought, so they wouldn't lose the touch of God.

I believed that I had been invited into the sacristy only because I was a little girl, and that if I ever became a woman I would no longer be allowed in; that once I became a woman the smell that would come from me would cause violence to God, as if when I became a woman I would have great stores of violence and sweat, enough to wipe out an entire town. In the sacristy, my father left being a father and a husband to become someone more like God—God, who had a son but no daughters; God, who had had a son without touching a woman. In the sacristy, as my father put on his vestments, I watched him become more like Jesus. When my father put on the long white alb and the colored chasuble over it, and knelt at the altar and raised his arms, he became more like Jesus still: someone without skin, without smell, without weight, in a separate dimension where everything shone from within and existed beyond any sound but music.

A memory: I am nearly three, and my little brother and I are awake. He is wearing diapers and rubber pants. We crawl along the hall to our parents' closed bedroom and scratch at the door till my father lets us in. The cloud of my mother's black hair is on the pillow, and she holds the sheet over her face. My father talks, though I can't remember what he says, and he doesn't let us onto the bed. My beautiful mother is hiding. Had they been fighting? Usually my mother was radiant, smiling, her arms open, already saying something funny, my father laughing with her. Her hair was so black on the pillow. Why couldn't I just touch her? And why do I remember this? Did I already understand that there was something sad and difficult between them or did I just want to see her face?

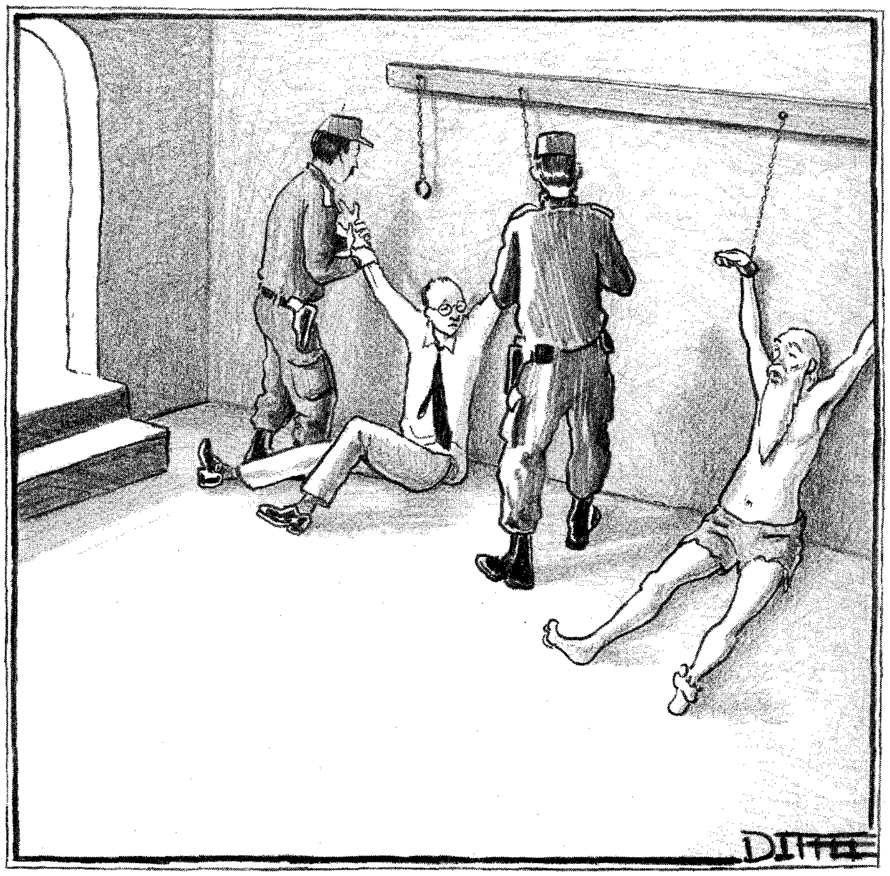
This memory came years after my parents' marriage exploded, when I was in my twenties. I imagine now that eventually, as my mother grew out of girlhood, she began to feel my father's distance as a sexual complication. Having entered into what I now understand to be a marriage of their time, my parents had no language to explore what might have been wrong with their erotic life. Instead, they began to feel mutual disappointment. My mother, being a woman of her era, considered the problem hers. Decades later, I learned that when we were living in Jersey City each of my parents was visiting a "shrink" in New York.

I had encountered, and repressed, the suggestion of my father's homosexual desire only once. I was in college, home for vacation in Washington, D.C., where my father was then a suffragan—or assistant—bishop, and it was in the evening, after supper. Perhaps my parents were out, because I walked into their bedroom and no one was there. The giant bed was on the right as you came in, and in red frames, arranged around its semicircular headboard, were baby photographs of their children, all nine of us—an altar to the generative power of my parents' marriage. I could have been looking for a safety pin or a Kleenex, but this night the light in my father's study was on, and suddenly, mysteriously, I was in search of something else. I don't remember if the book of photographs was already open, or if I opened it, but the image I saw was unlike anything I'd ever associated with my father. The photograph, in black and white, was of a young man, naked, standing on a stony beach. The texture was almost grainy, and the youth was beautiful, dreamy, slightly sullen. I remember that he stood, three-quarters turned from me, facing out to the sea so that his genitals were obscured. I understood that if I turned the page there would be another photograph like this one, that this was a book of such photographs, but I did not want to see another photograph like this one, nor did I want to be caught looking at the book.

At the time, I was still ignorant of any fissures in my parents' marriage, and I learned that my mother's dissatisfaction had a sexual element only after she and my father separated, some years later. It was the early nineteen-seventies, and I was visiting her in Washington. The Roma, where we were having lunch, was a big neighborhood trattoria that was quite empty at midday. The maître d' took us to a table in the back. We sat down, an unlit candle in red glass on the table between us. My mother was on one of her perennial diets, and she had no gray in her black hair and no wrinkles on her long face. We rarely looked directly at each other, and I recall her face turning aside. We both ordered wine, and then she looked up at me. My mother and I often talked about the changes in sexual attitudes from her generation to mine. At the time, for instance, like many of my friends, I was living with a man to whom I was not married. I don't remember how the conversation began, but suddenly my mother was saying, "I didn't have an orgasm until I was forty." I had no reply. "And when I finally did," she continued, "Paul said, 'What's the matter, Jenny?' " But this, like the picture of the young man in the book of photographs, was nakedness I did not want to see—my father, fumbling and insensitive as a lover; my mother new to sexual pleasure in her forties. It would be nearly two decades before I learned of my father's hidden life and the deeper suffering behind my mother's painful announcement.

In September of 1972, my father was installed as diocesan bishop of New York. For its Christmas issue, *Newsweek* celebrated by putting him on the cover, photographed in a red cope and mitre, holding a gold crosier, or bishop's crook, jewel-tone stained glass behind him. He looked like a Christmas card. In the photograph, his expression looks a little sad, and there is something close to the bone about the cover line, "The Church Faces Life," and about the title of the article, "An Activist Bishop Faces Life." The "life" under discussion was not his faltering marriage but the new reality the Christian Church confronted with the end of the heady nineteen-sixties. The article opened with a description of my father's installation service and went on to discuss the uphill battle he faced in his huge diocese and his major fund-raising efforts for ambitious urban work. The reporter wrote:

> In the cathedral's soaring Gothic nave, the cast of the rock musical "Godspell" danced and sang through the traditional Anglican Holy Communion service. Outside, 5,000 well-wishers—blacks and Puerto Ricans from nearby Harlem and the WASPish well-to-do from Wall Street and Park Avenue—



"I haven't been here that long—I'm just a huge ZZ Top fan."

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picnicked on the broad cathedral close. A steel band, folk guitarists and gospel singers entertained like minstrels at a medieval feast. Promptly at 3 p.m., the most solemn moment of the day began. With a fanfare of trumpets, the great bronze cathedral doors swung open to admit a procession of prelates in brightly colored vestments. When it was all over, a rock band joined a choir in a joyous *Gloria in Excelsis* from a mass written by the composer of "Hair," and the Episcopal Diocese of New York had a new bishop—the Rt. Rev. Paul Moore Jr.

My father had made social activism a central part of his work, and the article was accompanied by photographs of him performing a confirmation in Harlem, marching with Martin Luther King, Jr., fleeing tear gas at a Saigon peace rally in 1970. And photographs of my parents standing together at a family wedding in the Adirondacks two months earlier, and, even though my parents were separated and my father living in New York, a game of touch football in the Washington yard "with Jenny and the children." My mother died, of cancer, a year later.

Being bishop of New York offered my father new opportunities for activism. During the cathedral Easter Eucharist of 1976, at a time when the city was on the verge of bankruptcy and corporations began to depart their New York headquarters for sprawling glass buildings in the suburbs, he preached a sermon denouncing the captains of industry for abandoning the city, "like rats leaving a sinking ship." My father not only ordained women priests but, in 1977, ordained the first openly lesbian priest, and wrote a book about the resulting controversy, "Take a Bishop Like Me."

A year and a half after my mother's death, my father fell in love with and married a woman who swept away our family's past. She reminded me of Natasha in Chekhov's "Three Sisters." Sometimes my father's need to please her took the form of disloyalty to my mother. I was willing to listen to my father's stories about my mother's shortcomings when he took responsibility for his part in the difficulties of their marriage, but it enraged me when he blamed her, and, because he consistently blamed her, I defended her; she became my cause. A formality grew between my father and me that, for many years, verged on estrangement.

Early in the winter of 1986, I went to an AIDS memorial service at the cathedral. It was a requiem, and as part of the liturgy the names of the dead were recited, a process that took more than an hour. As I listened, I heard the names of friends, actors and poets and artists I had known, and then my father preached. In his crimson chimere and white rochet, he climbed the pulpit and began. It was a sermon about sexual freedom, about the lives these dead men had lived, about the presence of Christ's sacrifice in human suffering. This was not a new subject for him, but I had never heard him so fierce, so passionate, so loving. What came to me was this: Here is where I can come to find my father's love. There is, I told myself, magnificence in how he can give, opening his long arms, practically weeping on behalf of these men, dead of a plague; here is where I can come to be close to my father. In 1988, when my first book of poems was published, I dedicated it to him, taking it uptown and making a presentation. He had recently announced his retirement, after nearly two decades as bishop of New York. After his death, I found a note he wrote me then but never sent: "I have been savouring your poems. You are a VERY GOOD POET. Someday we'll talk about them."

Five years ago, my sister Rosemary and I sat with our father in a consulting room at New York-Presbyterian, listening to an oncologist trying to be gentle. My stepmother had died in 1999, and now my father had been diagnosed with melanoma. The doctor told us that when he looked at the MRI of my father's head, he stopped counting at six. Six sites of cancer, and they were continuing to spread—to replicate—across my father's brain. Something like spiderwebs, or mold.

Shortly afterward, I went to the house on Bank Street to meet my father for supper. He was wearing bluejeans and a red plaid flannel shirt, and, though he looked much younger than his eighty-three years, he was unsteady, and I held his arm as we walked to the restaurant. Despite the news, his spirits were high, and he was calculating whether in the time he had left he would be able to finish a new book.

"What is the book, Pop?"

He told me that he'd entered the priesthood not "to have people admire me" or "to do good," but because he'd always had a longing to celebrate the Eucharist. In the book, he would talk about some of his most powerful experiences of giving the sacrament, and how the time and place where a particular Eucharist had occurred—in Vietnam during the war, in a dry riverbed in India for a hundred thousand people, in Mississippi during the civil-rights movement—illuminated its meaning.

My father didn't accept that he was dying, and for that entire spring he travelled and preached. On March 23, 2003, four days after the United States invaded Iraq, he gave the sermon at St. John the Divine. ("Your fate will be determined by the power of millions of people of all faiths against the war and one solitary Texas politician being alone with Jesus. . . . This has to do with two different kinds of religions, it seems to me. The religion that says 'I talk to Jesus and therefore I am right,' and millions and millions of people of all faiths who disagree.") But, in spite of treatment, the cancer steadily progressed.

Two weeks later, my father received a terminal diagnosis; hospice caregivers were now on duty around the clock. In mid-April, Rosemary and I sat down with him and the hospice nurse, and Pop said that he wanted to stay at home "for the duration." It was as if he were asking our permission.

"Yes," we both said. "Yes, of course."

The next day, Good Friday, was my day to take care of him; I arrived after lunch, and stayed on. He was no longer able to finish sentences, so our talk, as darkness fell, was jagged with silences. What was one supposed to say in one's last conversations with one's father? We'd had no definitive reconciliation, but over the months of his illness our long estrangement had begun to dissolve, and, with it, the familiar, inchoate fear that sometimes kept me from touching him. As he got sicker, I found myself spending more and more time with him, almost running from the subway to the house on Bank Street; it was as if my childhood love for him had returned. The longing was almost physical, and its satisfaction came in just being in my father's presence, taking in his weight, the shape of his head, his posture. And now I was losing him! Wasn't there something I might say? Something I might offer him or ask of him that would make everything right? Of course not, I was thinking, when suddenly I heard him say, "Once upon a time . . ."

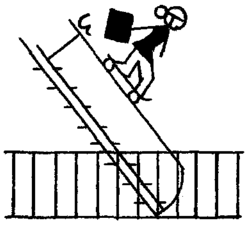
And then he stopped. He seemed a bit embarrassed.

I said, "Oh, tell it."

"I think I'm too—" He couldn't find the word, so he tapped his head.

"Please," I said into the darkness and moved across the room to sit next to him. I leaned in close, but he pulled away. All the old anger, I thought; it can't be helped. But I kept still, and then he began to speak again.

"Once upon a time," he said, "there was a little girl who lived by herself in a house in the forest. Every night, she dreamed of a wonderful man who would come and save her." He said "wonderful" as his mother would have, bouncing from syllable to syllable, the sound of the word becoming a world of tenderness and fascination. "Night after night, she dreamed of this man—oh, how she wanted this man!" My father was inside himself, not looking at me. "And then one night she heard the sound of footsteps outside." And here he tapped his chair with a finger. *Tap. Tap. Tap.* "Footsteps through the forest. The little girl was frightened. What was it? Who was it? And then she heard a knocking at her door." And Pop knocked on a table, hard: the bishop knocking on the doors of the cathedral. "Should she go to the door? She couldn't tell if it was a mean man or the dream man." A mean man or the dream man! I leaned forward, and he continued, no problem now with the sentences. "She was so scared. But she heard the knock again." And my father knocked again on his table. "And this time she went to the door and opened it, and there before her stood the most extraordinary man she had ever seen, dressed in white armor and carrying a sword and a spear."



This was a new story, nothing I'd ever heard him tell. It was as if this father of mine had walked the terrain of my dreams, had found there the thread of my story, a story he was now, at the brink of death, weaving from what had gone unsaid all our years together. Soon the girl and the man were dancing, he was saying—and I could see us, whirling around the room.

"Pop," I said after a while, "will they have breakfast?" I was thinking about the man and the girl in the story. My father hesitated, and then he smiled, a glint of mischief in his eyes.

"I can't tell you that now."

My father died in May, and in November a truckload of boxes and a few pieces of furniture were delivered to my apartment, on Riverside Drive. The apartment was small, and I'd chosen, I thought, a minimum of things from the estate, but there were many boxes to be unpacked. As the day went on, I developed a horrific headache. I continued unwrapping china anyway, filling the sink with hot, soapy water, washing the Staffordshire pitchers that had gathered dust for decades, first at Hollow Hill and later at Bank Street. It felt a little like Christmas. Out of a flat mirror box came a big watercolor of the living room at Hollow Hill, in which I could see the very pitchers I was unwrapping lined up on the shelves of a tall New England cupboard.

As it happened, it was my father's birthday, and his absence still sailed through me like a dark ship, alternating with images of his dying, and the visceral sense of his love that afternoon in his sunny bedroom, days before he died, when I sat watching him, imagining what our family might have been had we always had the love from him that I felt that day. Then the telephone rang.

He had a confident voice. Andrew Verver (as I'll call him) was the only person in my father's will whose name was unfamiliar when we sat in the lawyer's office the day before the funeral. Its mention had passed without comment, but later Rosemary identified Andrew as the man who had travelled with my father on a trip he took to Patmos the summer before.

Two months earlier, I had gone to the cathedral press office to pick up copies of my father's obituaries, and among the papers had been a letter from Andrew Verver dated the day after the funeral. He had been a "very close" friend of my father's for nearly thirty years, he wrote in a crooked but clear hand. He would like to visit my father's grave. He would like to see the videos that had been shown at the reception after the funeral.

I wrote him back that day: *Of course you can visit Pop's grave—I will try to get directions for you—I would also very much like to meet you. I'd love to hear about the trip to Patmos. My # is . . .* He had not called in September, but now it was my father's birthday, and here he was.

The beginning of the conversation was formal.

"Your father was a close friend of mine."

"Yes."

"For almost thirty years."

"Yes. You said so in your letter—"

"I'm sorry I didn't call sooner."

"I was just about to—"

"I had . . . feelings."

Andrew had been a student at Columbia, a Roman Catholic. "I was considering being received into the Episcopal Church," he said. This was in 1975. "I went to your father for advice. He was very helpful. At first it was a pastoral thing, and after a while we became friends." His voice was soft in texture. "We were very close friends," he repeated. "Paul came to my father's funeral. My family knew him."

"I'm so happy to be talking to you," I said.

"I would have called sooner—"

"I understand." Then there was silence. "I want to hear about Patmos," I said.

"I had been there before," Andrew said, "but Paul hadn't. I had had a spiritual experience in the cave, where St. John wrote the Book of Revelation. And Paul wanted to see it, so we went there."

Should I write this down? I reached for a notebook, and a pen. Andrew was silent, but I could hear him there. I couldn't get over his humility, the calm in his voice. And how he could wait through a silence.

"Your father was a good friend to me," he said.

"I'm so glad," I repeated. We had been talking for about twenty minutes. I kept being afraid he would hang up, that he would stop talking about my father, telling me these things. *Oh, please don't hang up.* Suddenly I realized I should take advantage of talking to this man who was so close to my father.

"Eat it fast or the coyotes will get it."

"Did he tell you about us? About . . . me?"

"You had some problems with each other."

"Yes," I said, "we did."

"We were so close, your father and I. He told me a lot of things." He didn't want to get off the telephone either.

"About—"

"About your family. About his life. We missed our plane to Patmos, and we had to spend the night on Samos, another island. Something about the missed connection freed Paul, and we really talked that night. It was a beautiful night, we sat outside, we ate fish." I could hear Andrew breathing. I could imagine this man holding on to my father's hand with the tenderness with which he was staying on the telephone, waiting. The silence opened, my headache throbbed. All over the floor was the crumpled newspaper.

"Did he talk to you about his sexual life?" Two men in Greece, a beautiful night.

"I was his sexual life," Andrew said.

"You were?" There was a silence and then we both began to laugh.

"For a long time."

"I am so happy he had someone like you," I managed to say.

"Of course, there were other men," he said.

I asked him whether there was any significance to the table that my father had left him in his will.

"Only that it was next to the bed!" he said. "Your father had a sense of humor." That quiet laugh again.

"Once, we were on the sofa, talking," he continued, "and Paul took off his bishop's ring and put it on my hand for a minute. The New York bishop's ring has windmills on it, and your father smiled and said, 'I'm your Dutch uncle.' " My father and this man about my age, whom I have never seen, next to him. Playfully, tenderly, he slips the heavy gold ring from his finger and puts it on Andrew's.

On the first anniversary of my father's death, Andrew and I drove to the Connecticut cemetery where he was buried, and, after finding the place where his gravestone would be installed, we drove to the house that had been my father's and parked the car. Next to it is a large town green that gives onto the Long Island Sound, and we walked through the gate and down to the water. After some time, we both turned away. "It's too sad to look at the house," I said. Andrew nodded, and we stood in silence, watching the small waves lap at the sand, foaming up, and then Andrew climbed out on the rock breakwater that extended into the sound. He stood for a while, then he came back.

"Are you sad?" I asked.

Andrew nodded. "I stayed with him here. We'd drive up from the city in his Volkswagen bug, and I'd take the train back." And then he asked, "Are you sad?"

I'd thought it would be dramatic to come back here with Andrew. I thought I would feel my father's presence again, but, instead, I felt empty.

"Let's go to lunch," I said. And we got back into the car and drove to a café. When we sat down, Andrew pulled out a thick folder of letters, twenty-five years of letters, and I began to leaf through them. *I've already asked Fr. Pridemore . . . to raise you from the dead*—the strange line jumped out.

"Raise you from the dead?" I asked. "What is this?"

"We hadn't seen each other for a while," Andrew said. "There was a mistake. My name was on the list of those dead of AIDS read at that Mass, and Paul heard my name, that I had died. It was a mistake. A friend of mine had died, and I'd submitted his name."

"What happened? Did you go up to him afterward?"

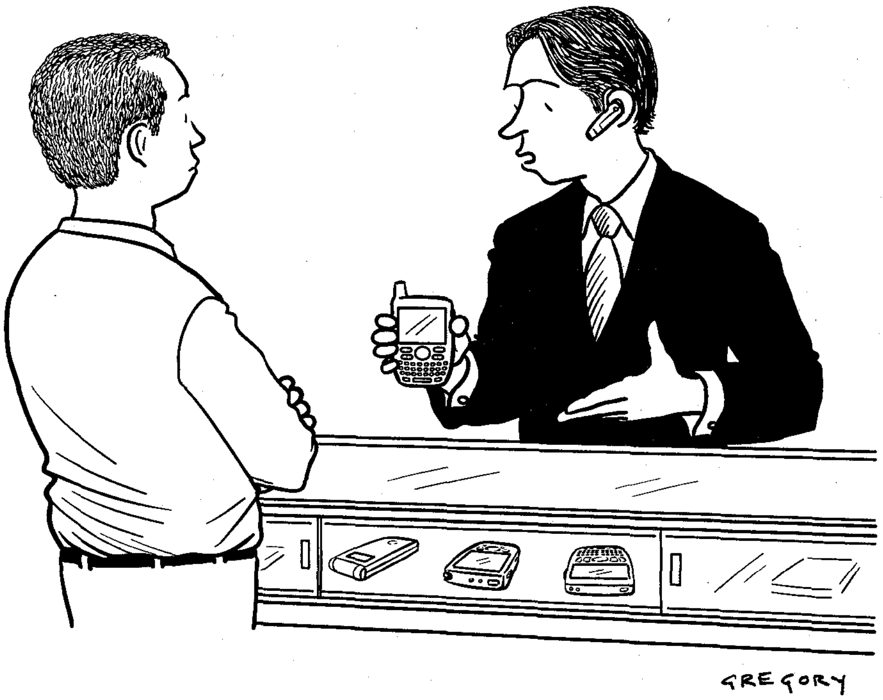
"I couldn't get to him, but he called my number that night."

I had been at that service, and it was during the sermon that night that I'd felt my father almost transfigured in the power of his preaching. It was also that night, years before the discovery of his hidden life, that, feeling the love coming from him as he preached, I had decided to accept who he was, to take the love he gave when he was his truest self, when he was preaching. Now I'd learned that my father had preached that night believing a man he loved had died.

A memory: One Easter, in Jersey City, I am in my new finery, and there he is, dressed in white, accompanied by vested acolytes, sweeping along the dusty street on his way to the church; I get not a kiss but a blessing—my father's hand raised, fingers poised and moving through the air in the shape of a cross.

In the darkness at the altar rail, I would hold the wafer in my mouth, allowing it to become wet with the wine that burned my throat. *Take, eat, this is my Body*, my father would say. Just as I came to understand that his splendid vestments were not ordinary clothes, I learned that during the Eucharist the bread and wine were shot through with something alive, which vibrated and trembled, and when I watched my father, enormously tall, the color of his vestments blurry through all the incense, in all the candlelight, it seemed to me he brought all this about. It made sense that when he sang Gregorian chant his voice would break. He was being transported by what he called "the presence of God," a force much more powerful than his physical body. What happened to him seemed also to happen in me, behind my eyes, on the surface of my skin, and when it happened I didn't think of how my mother looked with a baby on her hip, how my younger brothers and sisters shouted and screamed, or how awkward I felt at school. Instead, everything became comprehensible—simple, safe, and beautiful.

My father told me that when I was little, after sitting through a three-hour Good Friday service and hearing him tell the story of the Seven Last Words that Jesus spoke from the Cross—of how an earthquake "rent" the veil of the great temple, of how Mary watched her son die—I cried and cried. When he asked why I was crying, I said, "Because Jesus died." I don't remember any of that, but I could tell you the whole story, and as I told it I would see the darkness that descended as the rain fell, the light that broke through a gash in the clouds as the sky cleared, how it sounded when the young man on the Cross said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I would tell you about the old rich man who offered his own grave for Jesus at the last minute. I could make you see Jesus' face loosen as he finally died, and what I imagined Mary Magdalene looked like, sitting there on the ground looking up at him, the vials and pots of fragrant ointment in her lap. ♦



"This one's too hard to type on while I'm driving."

NEWYORKER.COM

An audio interview with Honor Moore.

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE LOST CHILDREN

What do tougher detention policies mean for illegal immigrant families?

BY MARGARET TALBOT

In the summer of 1995, an Iranian man named Majid Yourdkhani allowed a friend to photocopy pages from "The Satanic Verses," the Salman Rushdie novel, at the small print shop that he owned in Tehran. Government agents arrested the friend and came looking for Majid, who secretly crossed the border to Turkey and then flew to Canada. In his haste, Majid was forced to leave behind his wife, Masomeh; for months afterward, Iranian government agents phoned her and said things like "If you aren't divorcing him, then you are supporting him, and we will therefore arrest you and torture you." That October, Masomeh also escaped from Iran and joined Majid in Toronto, where they lived for ten years. Majid worked in a pizza place, Masomeh in a coffee shop. She dressed and acted the way she liked—she is blond and pretty and partial to bright clothes and makeup, which she could never wear in public in Iran—and for a long time the Yourdkhanis felt they were safe from politics and the past. Their son, Kevin, was born in Toronto, in 1997, a Canadian citizen. He grew into a happy, affectionate kid, tall and sturdy with a shock of dark hair. He liked math and social studies, developed asthma but dealt with it, and shared with his mom a taste for goofy comedies, such as the "Mr. Bean" movies. In December, 2005, however, the Yourdkhanis learned that the Canadian government had denied their application for political asylum, and Majid, Masomeh, and Kevin were deported to Iran.

Upon their return, the Yourdkhanis say, Masomeh was imprisoned for a month, and Majid for six, and during that time he was beaten and tortured. After Majid was released, the family paid a smuggler twenty thousand dollars to procure false documents and arrange a series of flights that would return them to Canada.

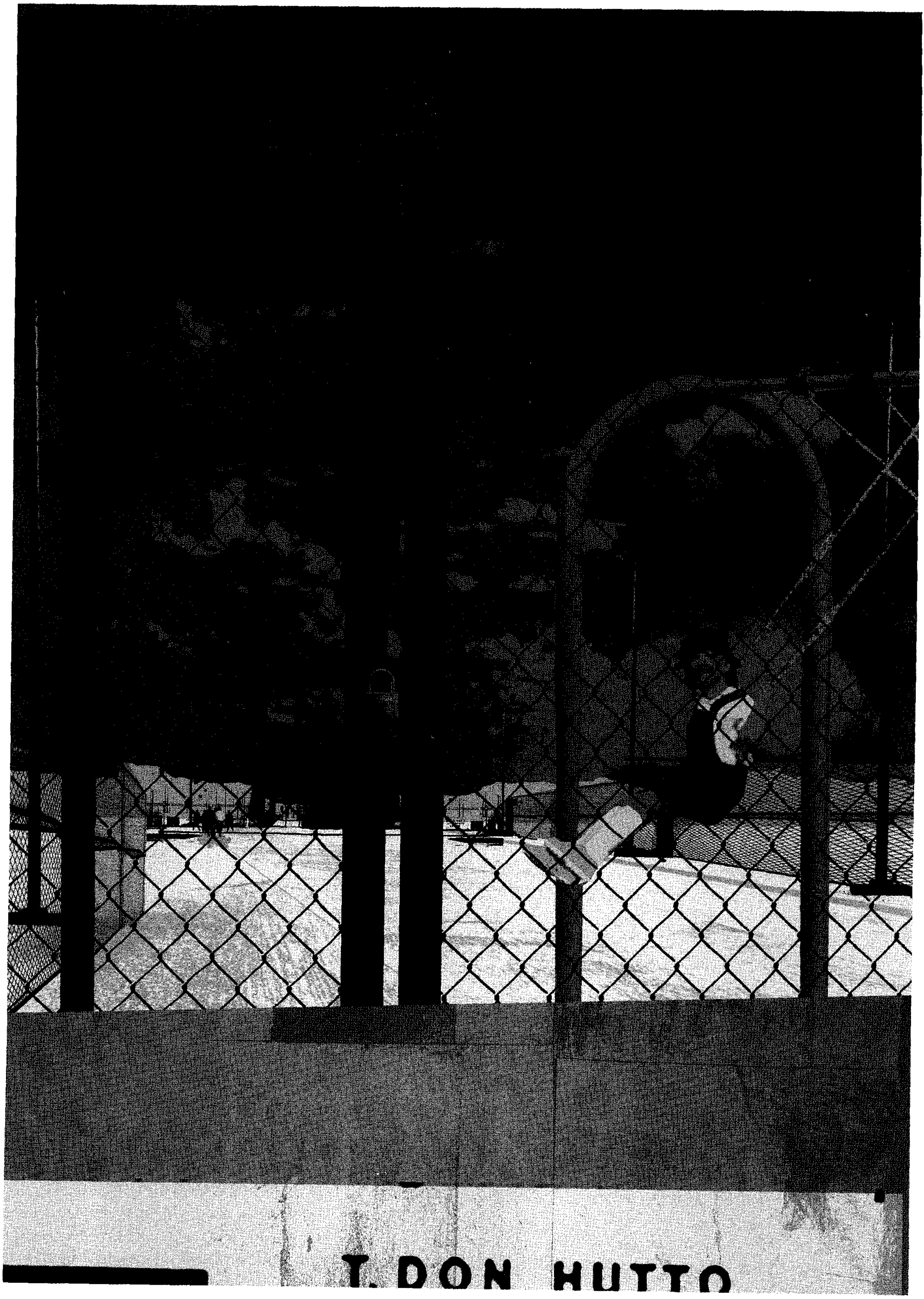
Then, on the last leg of the journey, the family ran into someone else's bad luck. On February 4, 2007, during a flight from Georgetown, Guyana, to Toronto, a passenger had a heart attack and died, and the plane was forced to make an unscheduled stop in Puerto Rico. American immigration officials there ascertained that the Yourdkhanis' travel documents were fake. The Yourdkhanis begged to be allowed to continue on to Canada, but they were told that if they wanted asylum they would have to apply for it in the United States. They did so, and, five days later, became part of one of the more peculiar, and contested, recent experiments in American immigration policy. They were locked inside a former medium-security prison in a desolate patch of rural Texas: the T. Don Hutto Residential Center.

Hutto is one of two immigrant-detention facilities in America that house families—the other is in Berks County, Pennsylvania—and is the only one owned and run by a private prison company. The detention of immigrants is the fastest-growing form of incarceration in this country, and, with the support of the Bush Administration, it is becoming a lucrative business. At the end of 2006, some fourteen thousand people were in government custody for immigration-law violations, in a patchwork of detention arrangements, including space rented out by hundreds of local and state jails, and seven freestanding facilities run by private contractors. This number was up by seventy-nine per cent from the previous year, an increase that can be attributed, in large part, to the actions of Michael Chertoff, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, which runs the Immigration and Customs Enforcement division. In 2005, Chertoff announced the end of "catch-and-release"—the long-standing practice of allowing immigrants caught without legal documents to remain free inside the country while they waited for an appearance in court. Since these illegal immigrants weren't monitored in any way, the rate of no-shows was predictably high, and the practice inflamed anti-immigrant sentiment.

Private companies began making inroads into the detention business in the nineteen-eighties, when the idea was in vogue that almost any private operation was inherently more efficient than a government one. The largest firm, Corrections Corporation of America, or C.C.A., was founded in 1983. But poor management and a series of well-publicized troubles—including riots at and escapes from prisons run by C.C.A.—dampened the initial excitement. In the nineties, C.C.A.'s bid to take over the entire prison system of Tennessee, where the company is based, failed; state legislators had grown skeptical. By the end of 2000, C.C.A.'s stock had hit an all-time low. When immigration detention started its precipitate climb following 9/11, private prison companies eagerly offered their empty beds, and the industry was revitalized.

One complication was that hundreds of children were among the immigrant detainees. Typically, kids had been sent to shelters, which allowed them to attend school, while parents were held at closed facilities. Nobody thought that it was good policy to separate parents from children—not immigration officials, not immigrant advocates, not Congress. In 2005, a report by the House Appropriations Committee expressed concern about "reports that children apprehended by D.H.S."—the Department of Homeland Security—"even as young as nursing infants, are being separated from their parents and placed in shelters." The committee also declared that children should not be placed in government custody unless their welfare was

Half the detainees at the T. Don Hutto Residential Center, a privately run prison in Texas, are children.



JOHN RITTER

LET'S TALK ABOUT MY DOG
KOREN

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in question, and added that the Department of Homeland Security should "release families or use alternatives to detention" whenever possible. The report recommended a new alternative to detention known as the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program—which allows people awaiting disposition of their immigration cases to be released into the community, provided that they are closely tracked by means such as electronic monitoring bracelets, curfews, and regular contact with a caseworker. The government has since established pilot programs in twelve cities, and reports that more than ninety per cent of the people enrolled in them show up for their court dates. The immigration agency could have made a priority of putting families, especially asylum seekers, into such programs. Instead, it chose to house families in Hutto, which is owned and run by C.C.A. Families would be kept together, but it would mean they were incarcerated together.

When the Yourdkhanis were sent to Hutto last winter, the facility had been open for nine months, but few Americans knew of its existence. Hutto is in Taylor, Texas, a town of seventeen thousand, forty miles northeast of Austin, with a lot of boarded-up businesses on its main streets. A National Guard recruiting station is on the eastern side of town; a place that offers concealed-weapons training is at the opposite end. Hutto has more than five hundred beds, though the population fluctuates, and the facility appears never to have been at full capacity; about half the detainees are children. At the time the Yourdkhanis got there, many of the four hundred or so detainees were from Latin-American countries (these did not include Mexico, because Mexicans caught without documents are automatically sent home), and some of those were people who had come to the United States for economic reasons; that is, they were the kind of undocumented immigrants that most people probably think of when they hear of immigrants being rounded up somewhere in Texas. But a substantial number of the families were asylum seekers—people from Iraq, Somalia, Iran, Romania. Like the Yourdkhanis, they were people who said that they had been persecuted in their home countries, and many of them had passed the first test for achieving asylum in the United States—a so-called "credible fear" interview. None had criminal records.

The Yourdkhanis, upon arriving at Hutto, saw a white concrete complex with slit-shaped windows, surrounded by double fencing topped by rolls of razor wire. A shadeless exercise yard was ringed by floodlights. Across the street was a railroad track where freight trains frequently idled, cutting off the facility from the rest of Taylor. Families were placed in former inmate cells. Each cell had a twin bed or a bunk bed with a thin mattress, a small metal or porcelain sink, and an exposed toilet. Generally, mothers and very young children stayed together in one cell, fathers in a separate cell, and older children in another. Husbands and wives were not allowed to visit each other's cells. Masomeh told me, "For three days, Majid had a fever, and I wasn't allowed to go to in and ask, 'How are you?'" The cell doors were metal, and each had a window two inches wide; the floor and walls were bare, except for a shatterproof acrylic mirror. Doors were to remain open during the day, but they were wired with laser-detection alarms that were triggered when anyone came or went at night. A 2007 report by two advocacy groups—the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children—noted that if a child sleeping in a separate cell woke up at night and went looking for his parents the alarm would sound, and only C.C.A. staff members were allowed to respond.

The guards at Hutto conducted as many as seven head counts a day, during which all detainees, even toddlers, were supposed to remain in place, usually by their beds, for as long as it took to complete the count. In practice, this meant that detainees might be in their cells twelve hours a day. (When head counts were not taking place, detainees could assemble in the common area within their "pod" of cells, where there were couches and two televisions.) Last March, an immigration lawyer named Griselda Ponce testified before the U.S. District Court in Austin about conditions at Hutto, and told of an occasion when the five- or six-year-old daughter of a woman she was interviewing had to go to the rest room. The captain on duty told the girl that she could not do so during a head count. Ponce said that the girl made "six or seven requests," and was rebuffed each time; after about fifteen minutes, the girl "smelled of urine."

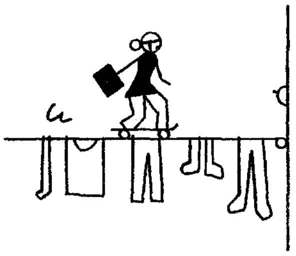
No contact visits were allowed at Hutto—relatives had to sit behind Plexiglas partitions and talk through phones in the old prison visiting room. In any case, few relatives visited, since Hutto was so far from where most of them lived. Deka Warsame, a Somali woman, was detained at Hutto for four months, along with her three children. Her mother and a sister lived in Columbus, Ohio, but she told her lawyer that, even if her family could have come to Texas, she would have been ashamed to have them see her looking like a criminal, "trapped behind Plexiglas." If detainees had an attorney, as Warsame did, the attorney could talk to them without a partition. During such conferences, children were required to stay by their parents' side. The governing idea of Hutto was that detainees would constantly supervise their children—as a result, it wasn't deemed a child-care facility, and required no relevant licensing. But this also meant that children had to be in the same room even when, say, their parents recounted stories of torture, rape, or domestic abuse. Barbara Hines, a law professor who runs an immigration clinic at the University of Texas, in Austin, and who was one of the first legal representatives to see detainees at Hutto, began bringing crayons and markers with her, hoping to distract the kids.

Children were regularly woken up at night by guards shining lights into their cells. They were roused each morning at five-thirty. Kids were not allowed to have stuffed animals, crayons, pencils, or pens in their cells. And they were not allowed to take the pictures they had made back to their cells and hang them up. When Hutto opened as an immigration-detention center, children attended school there only one hour a day. Detainees, including children, wore green or blue prison-issue scrubs. In November, 2006, Krista Gregory, who lives in Austin and works with church groups there, got a call from a couple of Hutto employees who, she says, were unhappy about the lack of supplies for child detainees. Gregory arranged for local churches to donate toys, baby blankets, and Bibles.

Staff members, who wore police-type uniforms, were mostly people who had backgrounds in corrections rather than in child welfare. Detainees said that when parents or children broke rules guards threatened them with separation from their children. Kevin Yourdkhani, at the prompting of one of Hines's law students, wrote a brief description of one such occasion. "I was in my bed and my dad came to fix my bed," he wrote. "When the police came and saw my dad in the room, he said, 'If He comes and see my dad again in my room His going to put my mom in a siprate jail and my dad in a sipate jail and me a foster kid.' I cried and cried so much that I lost my energy. I went to sleep. I felt If I will be siprated I can never see my parents again, and I will get stepparents and they will hurt me or maybe they will kill me."

Michelle Brané, an advocate with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, managed to get a tour of Hutto in December, 2006. Describing the facility as "an incredibly punitive-feeling place," she said, "People there told us that children were being punished for normal kid stuff—running around, making noise, tantrums. I have a two- and four-year-old at home, and I kept thinking, How would I manage in here keeping them under control? The shocking thing is that the people running it didn't realize any of that. I think they thought it was a great place."

Majid Yourdkhani told me that he and his wife felt as though they had "disappeared into a black hole. We'd ask the officers, 'What's our future here? What's going to happen to us? What do we need to do?' We'd ask, and nobody could tell us." That feeling of having disappeared wasn't entirely irrational. Getting information about Hutto—especially from the people who run it—is hard. Private prison companies are not subject to the same legal requirements as public prisons to provide incident reports on assaults, escapes, deaths, or rapes. It's true that a company's contract stipulates that it must report such incidents to the government agency for which it is a vender, and people seeking information about what goes on inside a private prison can submit a Freedom of Information Act request to the government agency. But this can be an exercise in frustration, as Judith Greene, a researcher who is a critic of private prisons, found out. Several years ago, she and a colleague, Joshua Miller, were doing research on a new prison in California City, California, that was to be operated by C.C.A. for the federal Bureau of Prisons. According to Greene, before awarding the contract the bureau had signalled that the government would not delegate to a private company the legal authority to use force against inmates. Greene and Miller wondered how this would work in practice. In a Freedom of Information Act request, Greene asked for documents that might shed light on this question. Eventually, she recalls, she heard from the Bureau of Prisons that it was prepared to give her the information but had to get permission from C.C.A.; a second letter informed her that C.C.A. had said no, claiming that the information she sought about the use of force was a business secret. Greene told me, "Prisons in general are to a great extent secretive, isolated places, but if you're dealing with private prisons you've got an additional layer to penetrate in order to find out essential facts and figures. And government agencies seem to give a lot of the decision-making to the private companies when it comes to what to reveal." A bill now pending in Congress would, for the first time, make private prisons as accountable about their daily operations as public ones.



It's easier to gain access to the death-row section of most publicly run prisons than it is to get into Hutto, unless you are a detainee or an employee of C.C.A. Even Jorge Bustamante, a sociologist and a former Nobel Peace Prize nominee, who is the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants, was denied access to Hutto. From Geneva, he had applied to visit, as part of a tour that he was making of immigration-detention facilities in the U.S, and permission was granted. But when he arrived in America, last May, Bustamante was told that permission had been revoked. Bustamante remains angry about the incident, and says he will mention it in a report that he plans to submit to the General Assembly this month. For my part, I got no response to repeated requests to tour the facility, which were sent by phone and fax to Evelyn Hernandez, the administrator of Hutto. (She also refused multiple requests to speak on the phone, as did top officials at C.C.A.) Two weeks after I submitted questions in writing to C.C.A. officials, I did receive some answers. Steven Owen, a spokesman for the corporation, wrote that "C.C.A. always strives to provide humane, safe and secure housing to the populations entrusted to our care in accordance with applicable laws and the expectations of our customers. We are proud of the company's 25-year track record." No reporters have been admitted on any occasion since a single-day group media tour, in February,

2007. Currently, the only way to see the inside of Hutto is to watch an intermittently blurry video available on YouTube, evidently filmed by immigration officials and later posted by a blogger. It shows kids and adults in blue and green scrubs walking down fluorescent-lit halls and eating food from plastic trays. There are brief shots of a prison cell outfitted with a crib and of a man lying on a couch, his wrist encircled by a bright-blue I.D. bracelet. Another sequence shows kids outside their cells, learning the alphabet song. The footage has no sound.

A SINGLE AUTUMN

The year my parents died
one that summer one that fall
three months and three days apart
I moved into the house
where they had lived their last years
it had never been theirs
and was still theirs in that way
for a while

echoes in every room
without a sound
all the things that we
had never been able to say
I could not remember

doll collection
in a china cabinet
plates stacked on shelves
lace on drop-leaf tables
a dried branch of bittersweet
before a hall mirror
were all planning to wait

the glass doors of the house
remained closed
the days had turned cold
and out in the tall hickories
the blaze of autumn had begun
on its own

I could do anything

—*W. S. Merwin*

Last March, the A.C.L.U., along with the immigration-law clinic at the University of Texas and the law firm LeBouef, Lamb, Greene & MacRae, brought suit against Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and the immigration officials who oversee Hutto. The suit said that conditions at Hutto violated a 1997 legal settlement that grew out of a Supreme Court case known as Flores v. Reno, which centered on the detention of minors who had arrived in the U.S. unaccompanied by an adult. The settlement called for minors in immigration custody to be released to family members or appointed custodians whenever possible, and ordered that children in detention be placed in the "least restrictive" setting available. Kevin Yourdkhani was among the twenty-six children named as plaintiffs in the A.C.L.U. case. In a statement for the U.S. District Court in Austin, his mother said of conditions at Hutto, "Majid and I cannot be good parents. We cannot provide Kevin with the basic things that he needs. . . . We cannot give him a pen to write with or any books to read. We cannot teach him about the outside world or let him run around, the way young boys should. We are totally helpless as parents and depend on the guards for everything." Her family, she said, "is falling apart in here."

The A.C.L.U. commissioned a psychiatrist to investigate conditions at Hutto, and, not surprisingly, the resulting report documented depression and fearfulness among children housed there, and predicted that, until the facility overhauled its "policies and procedures beyond recognition" and replaced its "current (correctional) staff," it would not be appropriate for children. More surprising, a psychiatric report commissioned by the government defendants also questioned the "authoritarian milieu fostered by this excessive number of security personnel," and criticized an atmosphere "capable of contributing to the development of unnecessary anxiety and stress for these children." The report's author, Richard Pesikoff, a professor of psychiatry at Baylor College of Medicine, concluded that it was "essential" to make changes at Hutto, in order to protect the mental health of the children.

Kevin, it must be said, was lucky. The plaintiffs' lawyers soon figured out that the crayons and markers they had brought in to occupy the kids while they talked to their parents could also be politically useful. They were particularly so in the hands of articulate, indignant Kevin. One day, Kevin drew an American flag and wrote "Pleace help us" inside one of the stripes. He drew a picture of his common area, with sofas, tables, "police," and "camra." And he wrote a letter to Stephen Harper, the Canadian Prime Minister, in a rainbow of colors: "Dear Mr. Priminster Harper, I don't like to stay in this jail. I'm only nine years old. I want to go to my school in Canada. I'm sleeping beside the wall. Please Mr. Priminster haper give visa for my family. This Place is not good for me. I want to get out of the cell." One of the University of Texas law students, Matthew Pizzo, placed Kevin's handiwork in his satchel, and Barbara Hines later mailed it to journalists in Canada. Newspapers and bloggers there started covering Kevin's story. Sometime around then, Hines recalls, she and her students were told by Hutto officials that they could no longer bring in crayons and markers.

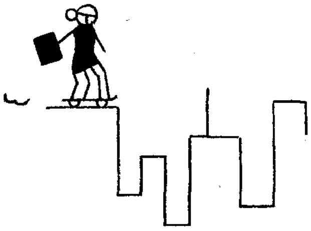
After six weeks at Hutto, the Yourdkhanis were released, and the Canadian government offered them temporary resident permits. Students at Hines's immigration clinic found the family a new lawyer in Toronto. The Yourdkhanis are now awaiting the outcome of a "humanitarian and compassionate" application for permanent residence, and their lawyer expects the process to be resolved by the end of the year. Majid is working at a restaurant; Masomeh is at home for the time being. In November, when I visited the Yourdkhanis in their high-rise apartment in Toronto, Kevin was excited about a new aquarium that his parents had bought for him. He had taken the bus home after school, grabbed an ice-cream bar out of the freezer, and was sprawled on the couch in shorts and a Darth Vader T-shirt, answering his parents' questions about a field trip that his class had taken that day. He told me that he tried not to think about Hutto, but said, "It was horrible in there. People should be free, especially kids." He said that he had given some thought to what he would do if anybody tried to take him away from Canada now. "I'd glue my foot to the ground," he said. "And they'd have to cut me out of the ground. They'd have to take the cement with me!"

Immigration officials have said that, before the A.C.L.U. lawsuit, the average length of detention at Hutto was about fifty days. For some families, however, the stays were much longer. Liliam Restrepo, a thirty-six-year-old Colombian woman, was detained at Hutto, along with her ten- and twelve-year-old daughters, Paola and Andrea, for nearly a year. In Colombia, she was an activist with the Partido Liberal Colombiano, and says that she had to leave because of threats from paramilitaries. She now lives in a cramped one-bedroom walkup in South Boston, where she cleans houses for a living, and is awaiting an appeal on her asylum claim. She told me that children come out of Hutto with "a mindset, a feeling they can't forget. It's bad for adults, but it's worse for children. My kids play these games—they still do—where they are arresting people. My one daughter, she is afraid now of the police. She doesn't want to walk by the police station at the end of our street. They have been trying to adapt to the life of freedom here, but it is difficult, because they unconsciously still feel they are detained. They can't stop thinking and talking about prison." Restrepo, a slim woman with long dark hair, was wearing a neatly pressed Corona Extra T-shirt and tiny gold hoop earrings. At her small, rickety kitchen table, she sat with her hands folded in her lap. The linoleum was cracked and worn, but somebody had tacked on the wall a calendar from a Chinese restaurant and an incongruous print of a couple of plummy-looking golfers on a lush green set of links. Life was clearly tough for Restrepo, but she was still glad to be out of Hutto. So were her daughters. Andrea recalled having to take a group shower with other kids, and being embarrassed; guards, she said, shouted at kids for running or making noise. What she missed most, she said, was "just being able to breathe real air." The facility has an indoor gym, but when the Restrepos were at Hutto there were days at a stretch when kids were not allowed outside.

Salwan Komo, an Iraqi refugee who belongs to the Chaldean Christian minority, was confined in Hutto for more than five months, along with his wife, Neven, and their baby daughter, Miryam. Komo had a sister living legally in Detroit, and his wife had an aunt and a brother who were living in San Diego. In Iraq, Chaldean Christians have been subject to persecution and killings by Muslim extremists. The Komos had stopped going to church there and feared for their lives; most of the family had fled to Syria, where it had become increasingly expensive for Iraqi refugees to live and employment was nearly impossible to find. The Komos had tried, they said, to come to America the right way. They had presented themselves to the guards at the Mexican border in Southern California, and said that they were seeking asylum. Neven put it this way: "We came to the door, we—how do you say?—asked to come into your house." If they had paid a smuggler and snuck into America, she noted, they probably would have avoided detention in Hutto.

In December, I met with the Komos in the immaculate little apartment where they now live, in El Cajon, near San Diego. It was a neighborhood of modest ranch houses and Spanish-style courtyard apartments, bejewelled with Christmas lights. Outside, the wind played punching bag with the giant inflatable polar bears and the manger scenes on the neatly tended front lawns. Inside, eighteen-month-old Miryam, in pink sweatpants and pigtails, was dancing to the Arabic-language music videos on a flat-screen TV, brandishing a cookie in one hand and a toy cell phone in the other. Komo explained that the family had recently been granted asylum, and that he now had a good job installing air-conditioning and heating units. Unlike the Yourdkhanis, he didn't think Hutto should be shut down—the government might need to put people there for short stays. "But if you have family and they can sign for you, they should let you leave," he said. "You know, the baby was only a few months old. She was too small for a place like this. At five-thirty in the morning, they push open the door—*boom, boom, boom.* We told them, 'Don't knock like this, please.' During the day, she need to nap. It was noisy. My wife close the door, but then they come—they call the captain and they make problems for us. We say, 'Can we get some different food for her? She won't eat this.' They say, 'If you don't like the food here, go back to your country.' But we didn't come here for the food—we had food. We come here for the safety. I say, 'I'll bring you the money. But when I'm in the jail I can't do anything for my family.' For two weeks, maybe one month, it's O.K., but not for five months, nine days."

Matthew Pizzo, the University of Texas law student, made a ritual of taking families to Wal-Mart when they were released. He says that Neven cried when she saw all the goods you could buy there. Pizzo remembers minding a three-year-old Iraqi girl as she played in the toy aisle while her parents bought clothes and baby food. A father with his own little girl asked Pizzo, "How old is your daughter?" Before thinking how the answer would sound to a stranger, Pizzo explained, "Oh, I'm not her father—I'm her attorney."



Last August, the A.C.L.U. settled its suit against the government. The agreement entails a number of changes at Hutto, including eliminating the head-count system, providing pajamas for children, letting kids keep a limited number of toys in their room during the day, making a priority of hiring people with experience in child welfare, and installing curtains around the toilets. In the months before the lawsuit was settled, Hutto had already started making changes: it got rid of the razor wire; expanded the length of educational instruction, first to four, then to seven hours a day; and began allowing detainees to wear their own clothes. Yet it seems unlikely that these changes would have been made without pressure from the A.C.L.U. lawsuit and from advocates like Barbara Hines and her students. The settlement also aimed to get people out of detention faster and stipulated that families at Hutto have their cases reviewed every thirty days, to determine if they could be released on parole or on bond.

Vanita Gupta, a staff attorney for the A.C.L.U. and the lead counsel on the Hutto case, says that she didn't think the government would agree to close Hutto down, so the settlement was the next best option. "We are very proud of it," she says of the settlement. "We fought for every word, tooth and nail. But at the end of the day do I feel detention is appropriate for children? No. The settlement forced the government to make tremendous changes, but these are still prison walls."

The A.C.L.U. and the plaintiffs in the case—all of whom Hutto released after the suit was filed—could, perhaps, also count as a victory a written statement made by Julie Myers, the new assistant secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement with the D.H.S., during her confirmation process last fall. Detaining families would continue to be an important part of the agency's operations, she wrote—indeed, the effort would likely be expanded—but "the physical structure of Hutto—a former prison—will not be used as the model for future facilities."

It's clear that Hutto is now a very different, and more humane, place than it was before the lawsuit. But, Gupta says, "it shouldn't have taken the A.C.L.U. to make the government realize that holding innocent children in a converted medium-security adult prison is a bad idea."

Why did the government turn to a former prison in the first place? It wasn't the most cost-effective option. C.C.A. charges the government nearly thirty-four million dollars a year to run the facility. And whereas close supervision of a released immigrant costs only about twelve dollars a day, incarcerating one costs about sixty-one, according to a 2000 study by the Vera Institute of Justice, a nonprofit organization based in New York. It is clear that the government knew almost from Hutto's inception that there were problems there. Last March, federal immigration officials found many "deficiencies" at Hutto, including inadequate sanitation and the lack of an immunization program for children—chicken pox had broken out. (Parents, the report noted, were afraid to tell Hutto officials when they found rashes on their children, because they thought it would prevent them from being released.) The inspectors said that C.C.A.'s "overall attitude is of disinterest and complacency," and concluded that the "overall review of the facility can accurately be rated as deficient." This evaluation was issued months after demonstrators from local immigrant-advocate groups had started holding vigils outside Hutto, in December, 2006, attracting coverage by local news outlets.

A separate internal memo, which was obtained by the A.C.L.U., expressed particular concern about the high turnover among employees at Hutto. The memo's author, whose name is redacted, complains about how hard it was to get straight answers from C.C.A. about staffing. ("Approximately five requests were made.") The memo goes on to report that, of the three hundred and thirty-eight employees who had been hired since Hutto opened, in May, 2006, two hundred and three had quit or been fired by March, 2007. That meant that "the average length of employment for the 170 critical positions of detention officer, program facilitator, correctional officer, and case manager is 3.01 months. C.C.A. is losing staff as quick as they can hire them." The memo blames low pay—C.C.A. pays new employees $10.22 an hour, versus the county standard of $14.36. (In general, private prison companies pay considerably less than public prisons.) The memo continues, "Unfortunately, the caliber of some employees at the T. Don Hutto facility is not as high as it should be considering the nature of business that is required in managing a family residential detention facility."

There is evidence that some immigration officials were skeptical about Hutto even before inspectors observed it in action. In August, several of the attorneys for the plaintiffs received a copy of a memo from someone who wanted to remain anonymous but who claimed to work in the Immigration and Customs Enforcement field office in San Antonio. The memo, which the letter writer said had been composed by senior staff in the office before Hutto was reopened, concluded that it would be a poor choice for a family-detention center. For one thing, Hutto was a "hard" detention facility, with cells and bars and barbed wire. For another, the town of Taylor had "a minimal Hispanic population. This would make it difficult to obtain Spanish-speaking community members to provide religious, social, medical, educational services." The memo also observed, with striking cynicism, that Taylor was too close to Austin, which had nonprofit and community organizations that "have typically been very strong advocates for immigrants." (This observation proved prophetic—it was Austin immigrant advocates, such as the students in Barbara Hines's clinic, who exposed the problems at Hutto.)

U.S. District Court Judge Sam Sparks, a sixty-eight-year-old lifelong Texan, presided over the A.C.L.U. case. He is not a typical Austin liberal. He is the grandson and great-grandson of county sheriffs, and was appointed to the federal bench by George H. W. Bush. At the first hearing about Hutto, on March 20, 2007, he sounded irascible. More than once, he made the point that the immigrants housed at Hutto had intentionally broken U.S. laws by coming here without a visa. He admonished Gupta, the lead A.C.L.U. attorney, "Take the cotton out of your ears." Yet, as Judge Sparks listened to testimony, he grew increasingly critical of the government. When he learned that children were required to be in the room even when their parents were sharing brutal stories with lawyers, he snapped at the government's attorney, Victor Lawrence, saying that the rule "best not apply tomorrow." Lawrence assured him that improvements had been made at Hutto, and would continue to be made. Sparks responded, "Why did there have to be changes in the first place? I mean, this is detention. This isn't the penitentiary. Even in the penitentiary, the lawyers can see their clients one-on-one, and do not have to speak in front of children!" Lawrence said, "Your Honor, you know, part of this is the novelty of the facility itself. It's a family detention center." Sparks replied, "That's right. And the government didn't see fit to issue any regulations. The government hadn't seen fit to go back into the Flores settlement for modification."

The government argued that the 1997 Flores settlement applied only to unaccompanied minors coming illegally to the United States, and not to minors who entered the country with their parents. Even so, Judge Sparks implied, the government would have to establish clear rules for how to detain families safely and humanely. And although officials at Hutto might be making changes now, he noted, didn't Lawrence have a feeling it was merely because the defendants knew, on account of the lawsuit, that "the hammer was coming down?" He said that he was beginning to wonder who was in charge "out there, either C.C.A. or the government. It's very troubling to me."

Lawrence returned to the government's fundamental argument that the most important goal was to keep immigrant families together, and that Hutto had succeeded in that goal. As he put it, "It makes common sense to everybody in this courtroom that that's a good thing—as opposed to separating them."

Judge Sparks replied, "But it would not be a good idea for them to hog-tie them and hang them up in lockers while they did it." Admitting that he was talking more like a lawyer than a judge, he added, "The truth of the matter is there are ways to do it that are right and there are ways to do it that are wrong."

"You have a condition whose name is very hard to remember."

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If you visit Taylor, Texas, it's not hard to see why people there might not want to give up on Hutto, and its two hundred or so jobs. On a drive into town, you pass a trailer park set amid spindly trees, and a fast-food chicken place that advertises "Livers and Gizzards Tuesday and Wednesday." Farther on, you see the Lone Star Pawn Shop, where a sign promises cautiously, "We can cash most payroll checks." Taylor has a couple of consignment shops, a few hair cutteries, several cotton gins, and two barbecue restaurants, Rudy Mikeska's and Louie Mueller's, that look as though they've been around a good long time. The sidewalks were mostly empty when I passed through on a sunny Monday morning, and on the side streets a number of the houses were ramshackle or derelict. A street leading to Hutto was cratered with potholes; the Landmark Inn and the liquor store were both abandoned.

The Hutto Correctional Facility opened in 1997, housing prisoners of the U.S. Marshals Service and overflow inmates from the county jail, as well as detainees displaced by hurricanes. Since the numbers were always fluctuating, C.C.A. was always struggling to find new customers, and in July, 2005, the company announced that it would have to close Hutto down. A last-minute reprieve came in December, in the form of an agreement with the federal government to detain non-criminal immigrants. The initial press release said nothing about children. At the time, Rick Zinsmeyer, a local resident, told the Taylor *Daily Press*, "The good part about it, and what Taylor gets out of it, is a lot more employees and more people coming into the town."

José Orta, who is retired from the Air Force and works maintaining the town's computer network, is one of a handful of people from Taylor who started protesting outside Hutto "once the word got around that they were holding children in there." It's been a lonely business. Orta told me, "I know people at my church who work at Hutto. When I try to talk to them about it, they just say, 'It's my job.' My sister had a friend who worked there. She was a single mom and her job before that had been cleaning hotel rooms for minimum wage, $5.85 an hour. C.C.A. is paying, like, twice that. I said to her, 'What if it were you and your son in there?' That was literally something she'd never thought about. When she realized I was one of the vigil organizers, she stopped speaking to me or my sister."

A few Taylor residents spoke out against Orta's efforts. In a letter to the *Daily Press,* Michelle Hernandez wrote of Hutto detainees, "These individuals are eating three meals a day, even if it isn't food that suits their palate. They have a dry, comfortable place to sleep, television and PlayStations, Xbox or whatever type of video games they have. The kids are getting an education, books to read, toys to play with. So many of our U.S. war veterans are homeless and don't even get that. Who the hell is marching and complaining on their behalf?"

On the day I drove past Hutto, there was no one outside on the brown patchy grass, and no children on the play structure in the bare exercise yard. A stiff wind whipped the four flags at the entrance: one for Texas, one for the Department of Homeland Security, one for the United

States, and one for the Corrections Corporation of America.

C.C.A. was founded in 1983 by a small group of politically well-connected entrepreneurs. One of them, Thomas Beasley, was the former chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party. Another, Terrell Don Hutto—the prison's namesake—was once the director of the state prison system in Arkansas. He was also the defendant in a famous case that went before the Supreme Court, in 1978. In Hutto v. Finney, one of the first successful lawsuits by prisoners against a correctional system, the Court held that conditions in the Arkansas state prisons, which placed prisoners in solitary confinement for indefinite periods of time, constituted cruel and unusual punishment.

Early investors in C.C.A. included Honey Alexander, the wife of Lamar Alexander, then the governor of Tennessee. Over the years, C.C.A. has continued to strengthen its political ties. The company's PAC gave more than three hundred thousand dollars during the 2006 election cycle, overwhelmingly to Republican congressional candidates, and has given more than a hundred thousand so far for the 2008 elections. The company's chairman, William Andrews, and its C.E.O., John Ferguson, have been generous donors to Republican senatorial and Presidential candidates. Philip Perry, who is the son-in-law of Dick Cheney, and who served as general counsel for the Department of Homeland Security between 2005 and 2007, lobbied for C.C.A. while he was at the law firm Latham & Watkins, to which he has returned. And C.C.A. spends a lot on lobbying. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, in 2005, the year that Homeland Security awarded C.C.A. the Hutto contract, the company paid close to $3.4 million dollars to five different firms to lobby the federal government.

The company's first contract, in 1984, was with the now defunct Immigration and Naturalization Service, for the building and oversight of an immigration holding center in Houston. C.C.A. soon began taking on contracts with counties, states, and the federal Bureau of Prisons. To win these entities over, private prison companies like C.C.A. argued that they could operate more cheaply and efficiently than the government could. It is certainly true that they can build prisons faster and cheaper, largely because they don't need to seek voter or legislator approval. The relatively low salaries make running prisons cheaper, too. In 1999, two criminologists, James Austin and Garry Coventry, of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, concluded that "privately operated facilities have a significantly lower staffing level and offer significantly lower salaries than public state correctional agencies." But Austin and Coventry also reported that private prisons had "a significantly higher rate of assaults on staff and inmates." Austin, who is now a criminal-justice consultant, told me that "he just didn't know" if that was still the case today—nobody had done a comparable follow-up study. (That could be because it's so hard to extract information from private prisons.) Austin noted, "In general, where there's higher staff turnover you're going to have rates of violence that are higher."

Occasionally, stories about the operations of private prisons reach the public, and many are discouraging. In Youngstown, Ohio, C.C.A. built and oversaw a facility that housed prisoners from the District of Columbia. In the late nineties, it gained notoriety for endemic violence. In its first year of operation, there were six inmate escapes, twenty stabbings (two of them were fatal), and numerous other assaults—figures that came to light only after a class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of the inmates. Among other problems at Youngstown, prisoners prone to violent behavior were housed with the general population—a situation that U.S. District Court Judge Sam Bell, who presided over the case, referred to as the "mixing of predators and their prey." Bell ordered all maximum-security inmates to be removed from Youngstown. C.C.A. admitted no wrongdoing, but in order to settle the suit it agreed to pay $1.6 million to prisoners and seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars in legal fees.

In 2004, inmates rioted and set fires at a private prison in Colorado run by C.C.A. A state investigation blamed mismanagement, and noted that C.C.A. had only thirty-three uniformed officers overseeing eleven hundred inmates when the riot erupted, and that the company paid its employees a third less than state prisons did.

Meanwhile, C.C.A. got into financial trouble by building prisons on spec—putting up facilities for which it did not yet have contracts—and by angering its stockholders with an ill-advised corporate restructuring. Over the course of 2000, C.C.A.'s stock price plummeted by ninety-three per cent. The company has

"I want us to get in on the ground floor of the next bandwagon."

since got back on much sounder financial footing. The hiring of John Ferguson, a former finance commissioner for the state of Tennessee, as C.E.O. helped. But the most important factor was the rise in immigrant detention. Since early 2002, the company's stock price has more than quadrupled, even though several of C.C.A.'s immigrant-detention centers have been plagued by their own problems—in 2005, a correctional officer at a San Diego facility was accused of raping a detainee.

During a conference call with investment analysts, in February, 2007, Ferguson was especially optimistic about the immigrant-detention trade. Noting that the elimination of the government's catch-and-release initiative was "helping" the bottom line, he said that the number of beds that Immigration and Customs Enforcement was asking for had risen from twenty-one thousand to twenty-seven thousand in the previous two years. He also noted that President Bush's proposed 2008 budget called for doubling the size of the border patrol, to more than eighteen thousand agents, before he left office. "So we feel very strong about the demand that is developing," Ferguson said. (At one point, he noted that, in all its facilities, C.C.A. had "worked hard in a number of areas to reduce medical costs, including modifying a number of our contracts to reduce or eliminate our responsibility for medical expenses.")

In the same conference call, Tracy Rabold, an analyst for Banc of America Securities, offered "congratulations on yet another good quarter." But Rabold wanted to know if lawsuits were causing any "throttling back," noting that lawsuits were "kind of part of the business, but there seems to be at least a little more publicity around some of the housing conditions that are being reported on the immigration side. Without getting into the philosophical discussion with that, I'm just curious if that is having any impact on Immigration and Customs Enforcement's arrest policies or the volume that you guys have seen from them." Ferguson said that more time was needed to assess the impact on the prison business. But William Andrews, C.C.A.'s chairman, told the analysts, "I just don't want to leave anybody the impression that these facilities . . . are in any way substandard. In fact, they're above standard." The negative reports, he said, had come "from special-interest groups that are attempting to do away with privatization and the whole immigration situation. We welcome anybody to visit our facilities, and the family facility, particularly at T. Don Hutto, is almost like a home."

Last May, a guard at Hutto was caught engaging in sexual activity with a female detainee in the cell that she shared with her young child. The guard was videotaped crawling out of the detainee's cell—trying, unsuccessfully, to avoid the camera—on two occasions, once at 11:36 P.M., seven minutes after entering, and once at 11:47 P.M., following a ten-minute visit. Employees watching the security camera alerted their supervisors. The man on the videotape was seen "adjusting his pants around the belt area" as he left, according to a report on the incident by federal investigators. (The report—or eighty of its four hundred pages, at least—was obtained by the Taylor *Daily Press*.) It is unclear if the activity was consensual, but any sexual contact between correctional officers and inmates in a federal prison is a crime. At the time of the incident, however, the law applied only to prisons under the authority of the Department of Justice, and not to immigrant-detention centers, which are under the authority of the Department of Homeland Security. The guard was not prosecuted. (This past July, Senator Dianne Feinstein, of California, introduced legislation that closed the loophole.)

The guard case caused a stir, and the commissioners of Williamson County, where Hutto is situated, became briefly concerned about Hutto. Williamson County acts as the middleman in the agreement between the federal government and C.C.A., and it receives a dollar a day for each detainee at Hutto—as much as a hundred and eighty thousand dollars a year. At a meeting in October, 2007, commissioners expressed worry that they might be named in any future lawsuits directed at Hutto or, as one commissioner put it, drawn into "the liability loop." The county was considering withdrawing from the contract.

At the meeting, a large contingent of Hutto employees showed up, dressed in their new, friendlier uniforms—maroon polos and khakis. They sat together in the audience, clapping and murmuring "Amen" as Evelyn Hernandez, the facility's administrator, gave an emotional speech about Hutto. She declared that she and her employees "provide a safe, secure, loving environment" for the families detained there. Hernandez spoke feelingly of the importance of keeping families together. She herself had a four-year-old, and "could not imagine ever having that child taken away from me, under any circumstances." She had moved to Texas from Idaho to take her job, she said, and she could have left her daughter with family in Idaho until she got settled. "But that child has to be with me," she said.

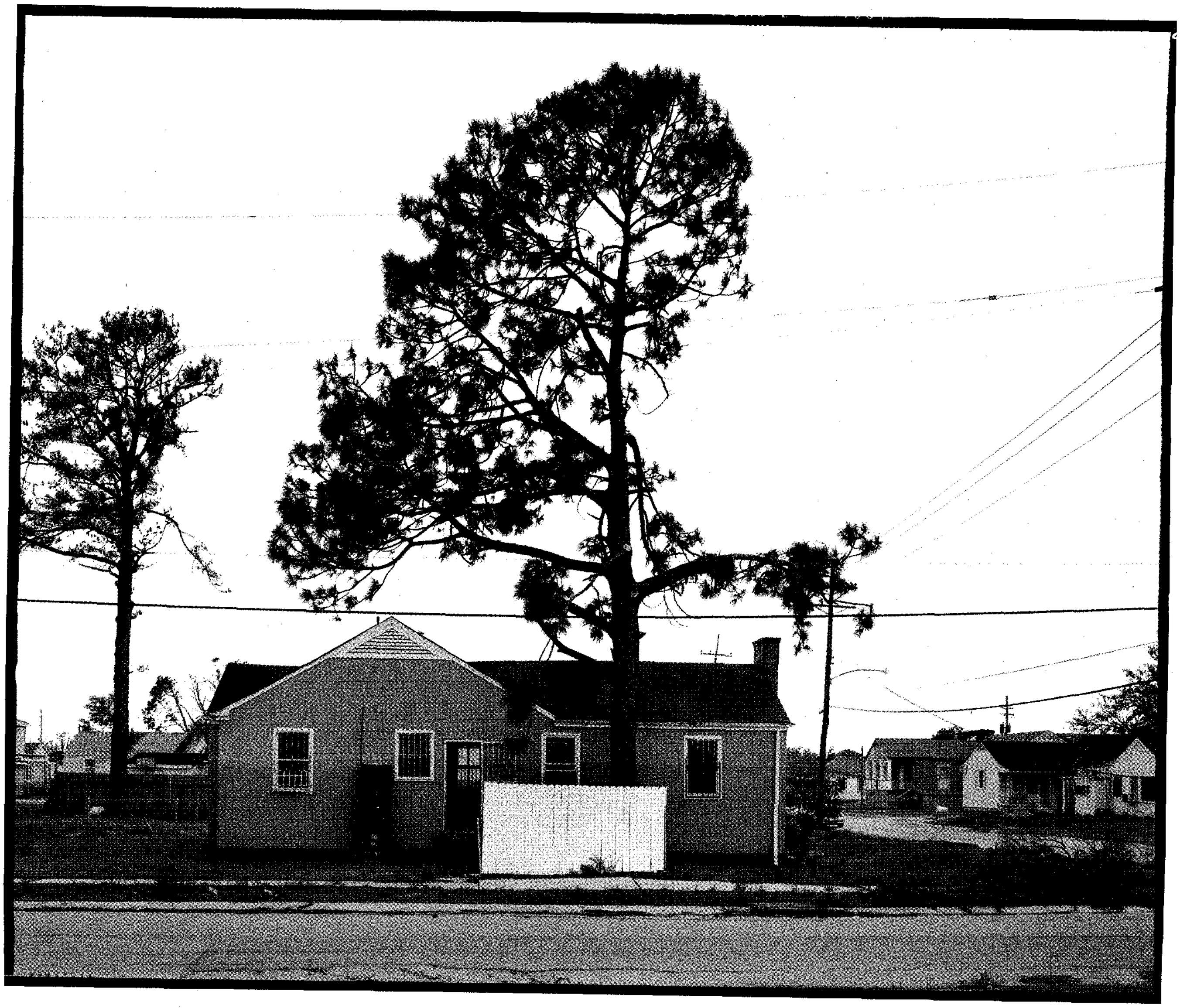
A lawyer for C.C.A., when it was his turn at the microphone, assured the commissioners that "it is extremely difficult for someone to successfully sue a county in Texas in this arena." The county really had no liability—after all, it didn't own the property or employ the people working there. Just in case, C.C.A. would indemnify the county, up to a quarter of a million dollars, for any future legal fees. The commissioners kept the contract.

Although the meeting had centered on matters of liability, it also exposed a deeper confusion. When we place families in a facility like Hutto, are we punishing them for coming to America? Or are we just keeping them somewhere safe, so that they don't get separated or disappear while we figure out what to do with them? Or, rather, is our policy to try somehow to combine the practical and the punitive? After all, if the goal was simply to keep track of immigrants, in most cases an electronic monitoring bracelet would suffice. And if the goal was simply to keep families together, we could surely house them in something other than a former prison, in a place where employees are trained in child welfare and kids can get fresh air. The decision to house families in a former prison was, perhaps, not so arbitrary after all. At the meeting that day, Cynthia Long, one of the county commissioners, a woman in a businesslike red blazer and glasses, spoke about keeping families together. But she also said something that probably represented the gut feeling of a lot of people who are angry about illegal immigration. Long said, "The thing we forget is the adults who are being detained have broken the law." Unfortunately, she went on, children sometimes "have to suffer with the sins of our parents"—"to suffer, if you can call it that, because of their parents' choices." ♦

FICTION

LEAVING FOR KENOSHA

BY RICHARD FORD



It was the anniversary of the disaster. Walter Hobbes was on his way uptown to pick up his daughter, Louise, at Trinity. She had the dentist at four. Then the two of them were going for a hilariously early dinner at the place Louise liked—Papa Andre's—out on the Chef Highway, a roadhouse on stilts that the flood had missed. Then they were going back to his condo for her homework and a Bill Murray movie. This was New Orleans.

It was their day. Betsy, Louise's mother, was driving out to appraise some subdivision plats in Mississippi, then was staying at Mitch Daigle's, across the lake. Which meant double whiskey sours and maybe a joint and some boiled shrimp. Walter and Betsy had been divorced for a year. Betsy had fallen in love with Mitch while she was showing him a house—a present he had planned for his wife for their twentieth anniversary. An anniversary that didn't quite come off. Now and then Walter saw Mitch's ex-wife, Hasty, at the Whole Foods. Hasty was once a great, auburn-haired stunner, from someplace in north Alabama—a former Miss Something at U.A.B. Now she'd grown a little sturdy in the middle. In the Whole Foods she always glared at Walter, as if he'd dispatched Betsy into her life to commit espionage on her perfect marriage. Once he'd caught her staring at him down the aisle of lettuces and artichokes. He'd just turned, and there she was. Instantly he'd smiled at her. And a silly implicating smile had begun on her face, too. Only her shoulders had dropped then. She'd shaken her head in frustration, and her mouth had turned down. She'd put both palms out toward him, as if to drive him away. Then she'd pushed her basket out of sight, leaving Walter looking at where she'd been, and on out the front window onto Magazine Street.

Louise said, "We observed a moment of silence today for the poor flood victims." They were driving up Prytania, past the French consul's residence, with the faded French flag out front and a big Citroën in the circular drive. Outside it was ninety-eight, but the A.C. was going in the car. Kids with their uniform shirttails out and carrying book satchels were walking along the sidewalk from another private school in the neighborhood. The dentist was close by.

"Did any of your classmates lose someone?" Walter asked.

"I suppose so," Louise said. Louise was in the seventh grade and knew everything about everything now. "Ginny Baxter, who's black and has a scholarship. She and I both opened our eyes at the same time and almost laughed. It was like everybody was praying, but they weren't, of course. It wasn't cool."

"Did you remember your device?" Louise's "device" was her night guard, which she was having adjusted at Dr. De Patria's office. She'd begun grinding her teeth at night and sometimes in the daytime, when night guards weren't thinkable. Dr. De Patria said this was a consequence of her parents' divorcing when she was twelve years and two months old. To Walter the fact that his daughter ground her teeth seemed a small, bitter tragedy.

"I've got it," Louise said and sighed a profound sigh, placing her two small hands in her lap and twiddling all her fingers at the same time on her knee. "I have two requests," she said, riding along.

"The court'll entertain two requests," Walter said. He was of course a lawyer. "As long as one of them's not skipping the dentist."

"It's not." Louise liked the dentist, who was a joke-meister who went on Catholic retreats in the woods, where he sat alone and thought for days on end. Louise considered this bizarre but interesting. He always complimented her on her beautiful teeth, which she liked to hear. "Ginny's family's taking her out of school—after one week—and moving away. It's today. I want to take her a sympathy card or whatever, and say goodbye. She'll be gone tomorrow."

"That's very considerate of you," Walter said. School had, in fact, been going for only a week, and already this was happening. Louise said nothing about his saying her being considerate was a nice feature. She had her hands deep in her knapsack, digging out the green plastic case that held her night guard. They were on the dentist's street. Aline Street, off St. Charles. "Why're they leaving now?" Walter said, angling the big Tahoe to the curb. He intended to wait in the waiting room, read *Time* magazines, then chat with De Patria about fishing and politics when Louise was finished.

Louise had her green case. "Her father works for U.P.S. He got this transfer. To Kenosha. Where's that?"

"It's in Wisconsin. If it's the same one."

"Ginny said that. It is."

"It's on Lake Michigan." He'd gone there once when he was in law school in Chicago. "It gets cold there."

"Do you think there're a lot of black people there?"

"There're a lot of black people everywhere up there."

This seemed to satisfy her.

Walter was getting out of the car, or starting to.

"Would you go buy a card for me? Please?" Louise said. "While I'm being adjusted? Then can we go out to her house and I can give it to her?"

"Where does Ginny live?" Walter said.

"I have the address. I wrote it down. It was on her knapsack like mine is." Louise said the name of the street, which was east, out St. Claude, almost to the parish line, in the part of town where many houses had been destroyed by the hurricane, two years ago. "They're leaving today," she said. Louise had long straight honey-brown hair and wore tortoiseshell glasses that made her look older than thirteen, made her look businesslike, which in a way she was. She was wearing her blue gingham Trinity skirt and her uniform white blouse and her white kneesocks. She looked perfect.

"We can certainly do that," Walter said.

"They have gobs of cards at Wal-Mart," Louise said. "I bought one for you there this year."

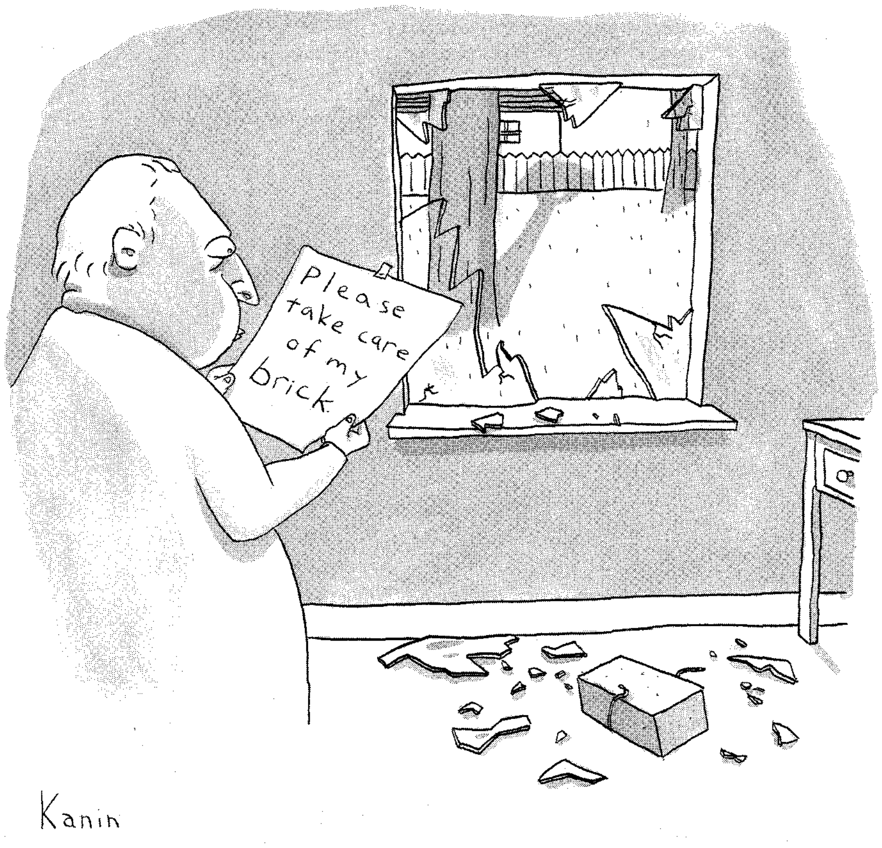
"What would you like a card to say?"

Louise looked at him seriously. This was something she'd been thinking about. " 'Have fun in Kenosha,' " she said. " 'We'd love to have you come back. Love, Louise Hobbes.' "

"I doubt if I'll find one that says exactly that," Walter said. "You'll have to write that yourself. I'll get you a plain one."

"But get a pretty one." Hot, gasping late-afternoon air swarmed the cavity of the car. Louise was standing outside the open door, holding it, looking in at her

ROBERT POLIDORI/"CORNER OF SPAIN AND ODIN, NEW ORLEANS, LA" (2008)


Please take care of my brick
Kanin

father. "Maybe get one with a New Orleans theme. So she'll remember everything down here when she's gone and be miserable to come back." Louise had her green night-guard container in her hand. Her nails were painted a similar green but were chipping. Green was her color. Nothing really frightened her or seemed impossible yet.

Often, at night, Walter Hobbes would lie awake in his apartment high above the broad curved sweep of the river, where container ships and tankers hung at anchor, their white running lights illuminating bits of the dense breezy darkness, and wonder what had caused Betsy to suddenly need to be divorced from him. It hadn't seemed necessary, even if Mitch Daigle *had* come onto the horizon, as he unfortunately had. Mitch Daigle wasn't even all that bad a fellow. He and Walter had known each other at the Bar Association, and been friendly doubles opponents for one summer at City Park. Mitch was from Ville Platte, a good coon-ass boy who'd come down to the city the way Walter had from Mississippi, to ride the oil-and-gas boom, now long over with. There had been a slew of them, young lawyers who'd arrived for a single reason and then made a stand. There wasn't a need to be long-established if you had money, and everybody did. The town welcomed that. They had both gone into private practice afterward and drifted away from their old firms. Then Betsy helped Mitch find a house on Palmer Avenue and made love to him right on the client's tester bed, and everything got wrong. Betsy explained to him during the divorce that she'd read a book in college at Hollins, about some children who were caught in a cyclone on a South Sea island. All the animals on the island—birds and lizards and furry creatures—went crazy before the storm came. Which didn't explain anything. It had become fashionable to blame bad things on the hurricane—things that would've certainly happened anyway—failures, misdeeds, infirmities of character that the hurricane could've had nothing to do with. As if life weren't its own personalized storm.

Because he was a lawyer, Walter knew you didn't expect to know why most things happened. You made the reasons up. It was difficult enough just to admit that things *did* happen. Life was lived mostly in your head—even for sweet Louise. Who knew what went on in that teeming brain? He didn't. The fact was—a fact that had to be accepted—that Betsy Hobbes had now thrown herself more into her work, was living alone in a condo just like he was, was being a part-time parent, and would be spending this evening on some hot screened-in porch, drinking whiskey and staring out toward the distant lights of the city and becoming bored with life again, only in some entirely new way. That had to pass for living in the moment if you were Betsy.

The Wal-Mart lot looked and felt hotter than any place he'd been all day, the mostly empty asphalt windy and buttery with petroleum fumes from the river. The Wal-Mart had been damaged, then looted, and hadn't been reopened long. A few souls, all black people—large women in too tight, bright-colored shorts trailing tiny kids, and muscular young men in football jerseys and baggy jeans—were trading in and out of the RETAIL entrance, navigating immense shopping carts.

Indoors, though, was instant cool relief from the outside. Walter was dressed for the office in a suit and tie, and no one here looked like him, which made him eager to get his business over with and leave. The general feeling inside the great merchandise biosphere, stretching in hazy light almost, but not quite, farther than you could see, was of people—citizens, families, shoppers, people in wheelchairs, people in motorized carts, children wandering on their own—all staying on, making an afternoon of Wal-Mart, taking their leisure as if this were home, letting Wal-Mart be what their day offered them.

He asked the merchandise checker at the entrance where the greeting cards could be found and went straight there—to a long single aisle between the party supplies and the discount luggage. There was no reason to make a difficult assignment of this. The one he chose wouldn't please Louise anyway. Left to herself, she would spend an hour scrutinizing everything, and then would find the exactly perfect card. Whereas he would never even see the correct one if he stayed here in the frigid, chlorinated air till midnight—which was possible to do.

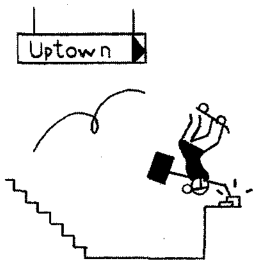
Most of the cards in the tiers were for regular, identifiable occasions—graduation, birthday, anniversary, confirmation, sympathy over a mother's death, illness, events requiring humor. There were a lot of these occasions. But there were no blank cards except two with sex themes—one that somebody had already written on and drawn a picture of a large, smiling penis with a mustache. Everything else required adaptation and compromise. You fitted your need for human expression into a category somebody else had thought up in advance and found words for, and then you bought the card, signed it, sealed it up, and tried to think it was just right.

There were lots of cards on which the people depicted were black people, although they were mostly tan-colored, clean-cut black people, men wearing chinos and oxford-cloth shirts, women smiling out at fields of dazzling spring flowers, wearing Peter Pan blouses and gold wedding bands, and children looking like they'd done very well on their science projects and were ready for Harvard a year early. They weren't much like the people in Wal-Mart today. Walter wondered if Ginny Baxter might appreciate a card semi-personalized to her race. It was tempting to ask one of the blue-smocked sales associates if she or he would be offended if a white child gave their black child a friendship card in which the human beings portrayed were more or less black, too.

There was one, however, that said, "Have a Wonderful Trip!" A bright-red minivan full of waving, smiling, vaguely non-Caucasian children was depicted pulling out of the driveway of a big suburban house with a spreading leafy oak on a grassy green yard. Inside, the card showed lots of bright festive balloons rising in the clean air, and a message that said, "We won't be happy 'til you're back!" This was inappropriate. Louise would loathe the black characters and undoubtedly conclude it was racist. She would also hate the minivan and the house and the tree and the smiles and the balloons. Plus, these black people were obviously headed to Orlando, not Kenosha. There was simply nothing he could do that was right here, he realized. The task was beyond his abilities. Louise should've made her own card out of construction paper and put her own words on it. Only there hadn't been time. Ginny was leaving right away. There wasn't a chance to make a proper observance.

He had to choose one, though. That's why he was here in this freezing Wal-Mart with his suit on. Louise never asked for much. He had to come through. When he first knew Betsy Montjoy, when he was new in New Orleans and fresh from law school, he used to give her cards that he'd "customized." Walter Hobbes specials, she'd called them. "Sorry to hear you've been in the hospital." Onto which he would Magic Marker "mental" in front of hospital. "It's your birthday." Onto which he would carefully print "60th." Betsy loved to anticipate something funny, and would already be smiling as she sat in the car or across the table in Galatoire's, awaiting him. These occasions usually prompted her to say he was "a nut," or sometimes that he was "pretty wild and most likely dangerous," or that he was "the cleverest man in the world." None of which, he knew, was true. He was only Walter D. Hobbes from Yazoo City, a skinny, good-natured oil-and-gas lawyer who read the *Wall Street Journal*, voted Democrat, liked seersucker suits with black penny loafers and loud bow ties, and hoped that all this meant she would marry him.

From the rack, he plucked out a card that featured a big cartoon goose with its beak taped shut and its big goose eyes bulging in excitement. Inside, it said, "It goose without saying that I love you." Little red hearts were floating all around, and the goose was again pictured, this time smiling without his beak taped. Louise could customize this one, Walter thought. In her knapsack she kept a box of colored pens. She could write in something clever on the drive out. Ginny would forget all about a card in two days, anyway. In all probability a goodbye card would never make it to Kenosha. But the gesture would. Louise would understand how true this was. There were really no words for what was happening to Ginny.



Tony De Patria, the dentist, was standing outside his little office—a Mediterranean-looking house where his parents had been young marrieds in the thirties, and which Tony had bought and converted into a single dentist's practice. He was wearing his white dentist's smock and was talking to Louise on the front steps. She was the last patient for the day. He didn't want her waiting outside by herself. Tony was Walter's dentist, too, and he was Betsy's dentist. He might've been Mitch Daigle's dentist for the difference it made. Tony De Patria was a tall, Adam's-apple Yat who'd gone to L.S.U., practiced Catholic mysticism, read Kant, and liked to tell randy jokes when your mouth was full of metal stuff in the dentist's chair. He didn't tell these jokes to Louise, of course.

"I was just explaining the concept of phantom limbs to your young medical student here," De Patria was saying. Louise had obviously explained to him that she intended to become a doctor, which was something she'd just made up. De Patria was holding open the car door for Louise to climb in with her night-guard container and a plastic bag containing new dental supplies. He smiled toward Louise a smile meant to indicate that there was a rich secret between them. He had daughters of his own he was crazy about. De Patria loved being a dentist and saw intricate connections between dentistry and the priestly vocation. He had a long schnoz and big Groucho eyebrows he could make caper and cavort to humorous effect.

"So are phantom limbs part of the general discussion of night guards and teeth grinding?" Walter ducked to see De Patria, the opened car door funnelling in more steaming tropical air.

"More toward the general discussion of loss," De Patria said, and his eyebrows in fact darted up. He had an unexpected high-pitched voice and black silky hair on the back of his clever hands. Loss, divorce, disaster had obviously been part of their secret discussion.

Louise frowned at Walter from behind her tortoiseshell spectacles, in case he was about to say something dreadful.

Louise had constructed her "look" herself: studious, possibly stern, loyal, and, in a way that only she understood, sexy.

De Patria talked in this stilted, mocking, pseudo-philosophical way at the end of every appointment, as if there were an important spiritual dimension to amalgam replacements or partial bridgework that couldn't properly be entered upon employing normal dental lingo. De Patria, Walter felt, was the most fully engaged man he knew.

"Apropos of the season," Walter said to the issue of loss.

"Apropos of the season," De Patria agreed. "A loss becomes its own elemental presence."

"How're her teeth?" Walter said.

De Patria smiled. "Beautiful. She knows what to do."

"I know what to do," Louise said. She smiled garishly at her father and revealed the yellowed acrylic night guard snapped into place over her perfect incisors. "I have to wear this all my life now," she said.

"Or at least until the tension subsides," De Patria said with a grin of comprehension.

"We're working on that," Walter said.

"If we knew what went on between women and men we wouldn't need dentists, would we?" De Patria said and closed the car door.

"He's a creep," Louise said immediately. De Patria was six inches away behind the window glass, still talking on about women and men.

"No, he's not," Walter said. "He's a smart man, and he likes you."

"Everybody's smart," Louise said, her night guard still bulging in her mouth, as Walter eased them away from the curb.

"This is *so queer!*" Louise said menacingly. She had the Wal-Mart card open and was now appraising it from the passenger's seat. "Why's this stupid bird or whatever have tape on its stupid mouth? And what goes without saying? 'I love you'? That's revolting." They were driving out St. Claude Avenue, a wide parched boulevard through an old, mostly black section of shut-down schools, closed appliance stores with their wrecked appliances set out on the sidewalk, closed and boarded Burger Kings and Hardee's, distressed gas stations and shabby bars. Many of the passing ruined houses were still marked in the cruciform code of the National Guard from two years back. Few people were on the streets, and only every other traffic light seemed to be working.

Louise was officially mortified by his faulty card selection, which made Walter disheartened, since it meant she'd be resentful and irritable the rest of the night. The one night of the week that was theirs, and when he'd made nice plans.

"I thought you could use your Sharpies," he said, "and customize it into something funny. Or sweet."

"Like what? It's stupid." Louise promptly tore the goose card in half and then in fourths and then in eighths, and threw the pieces on the car floor. "Now I don't have anything to give."

"I think you still have your winning personality," Walter said. "I'm sure that'll make Ginny change her mind about leaving. Plus I risked my life going to Wal-Mart."

"Fuck Wal-Mart. And you didn't risk your life. That's racist." Louise turned away and crossed her legs tightly.

"How old are you?" Walter said, steering with caution through another lightless intersection. St. Claude was no place to have a wreck. People were in a bad mood here. And there were no police around to save you.

"Old enough to say 'Fuck Wal-Mart,'" Louise said. "And a lot more."

"You could try to think of something affectionate to say to Ginny." Louise had already announced the address on Charbonnet Street before she saw the offending card. Otherwise she'd be balking. But they were going, card or no card.

"I'm not going without a gift. *That* goes without saying." Louise had anger at her disposal now. It was a relatively new asset.

"Well, you'd better think of one fast. You might conclude this isn't about a card. It's a gesture."

"What am I supposed to say?" Louise sniffed, as if she might possibly cry a little, or at least try to cry. This was not one of her assets—crying. Or her mother's.

"O.K.," Walter said. "Let's see. How about 'Dear Ginny, I'll miss you when you're gone.' Or, 'Dear Ginny, I hope your new life in Kenosha is wonderful.' Or, 'I hope I see you again.' Those are pretty serviceable ones."

"And they're pathetic."

Louise was grinding her teeth hard and did not have her device in.

"No, they're not pathetic. They're the things that shouldn't go without saying. This is a part of your education."

"Why did you get divorced?" Louise said blazingly. It had been a subject on other occasions.

"I don't know," Walter said, seeing a Charbonnet Street sign up ahead. It was a paper placard someone had nailed to a telephone pole in place of the regular sign, which had disappeared. Up and down the creosote pole were other placards advertising "Demolición de su Casa."

"Yes, you do. Was it your fault?" Louise said angrily.

"I'm sure it was."

"Why did you do it, then? You were bad."

"Nature never likes to be observed," Walter said. "Though some things'd be better if it did. At least a little. Sometimes."

Louise looked at him contemptuously, blinking behind her glasses, her fists clinched around her green night-guard case, her sack of dental supplies in her lap. Louise had gained some weight in the last month, and she had a pimple in the middle of her forehead that she was leaving unattended out of spite. The little torn-apart goose-card pieces were on her black school shoes.

"I don't understand you," she said, as though she was thirty and he was her boyfriend and they'd just broken up for the sixth time over some piece of silliness.

"I know," Walter said, slowing for the careful turn to the left. "But that'll have to do for now. It can be an interesting subject for you to think about."

Charbonnet Street was a long street of wreckages. Where the floodwater had hurtled through, houses had been flattened, others moved off their foundations, others had their roofs floated away. Though others—the compact, sturdy brick ones—had simply been ruined in a way that left them seeming almost whole. Weeds flourished in lots with concrete slabs that once had supported houses. Two years ago, when he'd first come to see it all out here, a red fibreglass fishing boat had been preposterously hoisted and left on top of one house, and at another an ancient green Studebaker had been forced through the front door and into the living room by the passing water. Most of the houses still bore a gray dirt stain of the high-water line—some above the windows—and many retained the same crossed axes left by the rescuers. One house had "No Pig Found/9-1" scrawled on its front door. Another house simply said, "One dead here."

Farther down the street, which stretched out toward the faraway lake and the hot white sky, a crew of young shirtless black men was gutting a house and loading the usable timbers and shingles onto a sagging pickup. But almost no one was living in any house now, or in the acres of streets in either direction, streets that looked like open fields. It was the Lower Nine. It was the land far below sea level, the submersible land that had always been poor and black but had been a place to live. Now that seemed finished. Louise's school had made field trips to here, and written poems and essays all about it, painted desolate pictures, written letters to kids who were now in other cities, and in which the letter writers had predicted that everything would soon be restored and become even better. So far that hadn't happened.

Louise was now sunk in silence. Possibly, Walter thought, she was trying out phrases she might want to say to Ginny when they got to where Ginny lived. Or, possibly the dread weight of destruction—mute, grammarless, still—had struck her speechless. Ahead, some white electric-utility men in white helmets were gathered around a light pole, connecting or disconnecting power to someplace. A couple of wrecked houses had white trailers in their front yards. But no one else was in sight. A brown-and-black spotted dog stood in the crumbled street and stared at Walter's car and didn't move as they eased past.

"This is horrible," Louise said, as if she'd never seen any of it before. She put her nose to the window and ticked her glasses frames against the pane. There was nothing Walter felt that needed to be said. They had a reason to be here. Everything else did go without saying.

The street numbers that remained on the few standing houses were leading them toward the place they were going, which wasn't much farther. "Ginny lives with her grandmother," Louise said without inflection and breathed a small, soft cloud onto the window glass. She had become resolute again.

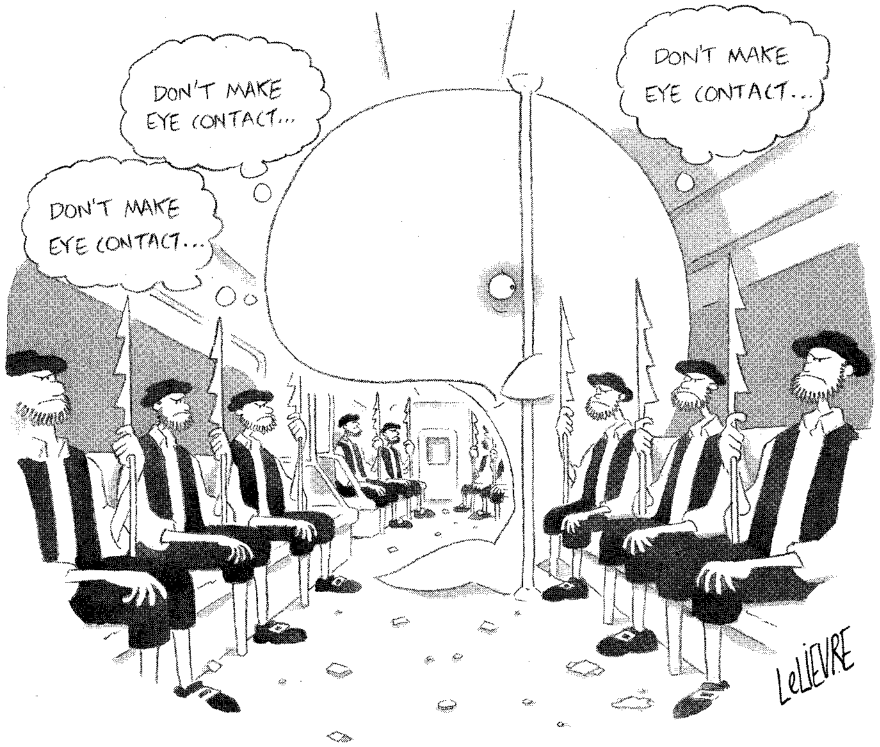
Ahead, in the next emptied-out block, Walter could see a collection of vehicles that none of the other houses or vacant lots had in front of them. Someone was visible there—a man hefting articles of some kind into a shiny black minivan. Not so different from the card at Wal-Mart.

"There's Ginny," Louise said, instantly buoyant. She knew everything she would say now.

A girl dressed in a uniform exactly like Louise's waited on the opposite side of the street from where the man was loading cardboard boxes into the minivan, and where two more cars were parked at the curb. She was in front of what had once been a house but was now a weed-encircled concrete slab with a relic chain-link fence across what would've been a back yard, where an old-fashioned mangle iron sat marooned on its side. Everything around Ginny was open ground, though farther down Charbonnet Street three houses still stood in a row, and a steepled white church rose from two streets over. Gulls soared above everything, occasionally singing out. The square husk of a tan school building sat in the middle distance, surrounded by nothing. It was striking, Walter Hobbes thought. The character of this particular destruction was in fact quite diverse.

Louise was out of the car before it got properly stopped. Ginny, on the curb, saw her, knew her, but didn't move or motion. Louise went straight up to her and started talking as if something official was going on. She took Ginny's hand and waggled her arm until Ginny said something and smiled. Louise and Ginny looked alike in their school uniforms and tortoiseshell glasses and long straight hair.

Across the street from where the girls were, there was a remarkably new house, raised on clean wooden pillars to a man's height above the ground, everything freshly painted hot blue with white trim. A smooth white concrete driveway had been laid, new azalea plantings were set in between the pillars, bright plastic geraniums in window boxes. A small elderly black woman stood on the elevated front porch, watching the man loading boxes and some suitcases into the minivan—all things he'd brought from inside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the house. The van had Louisiana license plates.

For a moment, the man loading the van didn't seem to see that anyone had arrived. But then he did and stopped loading and looked first at the two girls and then at the Tahoe and at Walter. He was a moderately sized, beige-skinned man with short, well-tended hair, wearing a tank top he'd sweated through in the heat, and Bermuda shorts he'd also sweated through, and black basketball sneakers with athletic socks. The man, who must've been Ginny's father (though the skin was wrong), came across Charbonnet Street, rubbing his two hands together, as Walter climbed out into the radiant heat.

"Louise wanted to come say goodbye," Walter said. Everything was permissible here, though no one but the girls knew each other.

"All right," the man said. He was conceivably thirty-two and looked like he might, indeed, be a U.P.S. man—mild, helpful, honest, dependable, yet fierce in some way a brown uniform could conceal. "I guess they know each other," the man said.

"Louise is my daughter," Walter said. "They're in the same class."

"O.K.," the man said and looked at his own daughter. She and Louise were now locked in their own fast privacy. "Ginny," he said, interrupting them. "This is Louise's father." Louise and Ginny stopped talking and looked at Walter. He smiled, and effected a small wave.

A second woman had come out onto the front porch of the new blue house and was standing beside the tiny, elderly woman, looking across the newly sodded St. Augustine at Walter and Ginny's father in the street. She was very dark-skinned and statuesque, with her hair in cornrows.

"I'm Walter Hobbes." Walter extended his hand to be shaken.

"It's Jerry," Ginny's father said and shook Walter's hand with a not especially firm grip. He was softly muscular and fit in a way Walter realized he himself probably wasn't. He had a smooth, almost featurelessly handsome face and a tiny gold stud in his left earlobe, something he didn't wear to work. On his left biceps was a tattoo that said "Sheri" in curving green script.

The two of them, Walter and Ginny's father, stood then and looked down the street of ruined houses and empty lots in the direction of the bayou levee and the soaring opal sky. This was the girls' visit, and the girls were conducting it. Nothing came into Walter's mind to say. Nothing on the subject of what it was like to be a U.P.S. man, or the subject of being black, or about children or moving to Kenosha in the heat of an August day.

"What do you do?" Jerry said, as if something had just surprised him.

"Lawyer," Walter said.

"O.K.," Jerry said. "That's good."

"Is that your house?" Walter surveyed the bright-blue shotgun house with the two women on the porch watching him as if he might be someone who could cause trouble. Louise suddenly laughed and said, "Oh, *you*. You're so funny." The skinny spotted dog that had been in the street was now trotting past, headed out into what had become open fields.

Jerry glanced at the house, waved at the women, and smiled. "It's my mother-in-law's."

"It's nice," Walter said.

"Oh yeah. Some people came along and just built it. Volunteers from someplace. Said it was a model house. It's where her old house was 'til the storm took it. She just moved right in like nothing ever happened. She's from way in the country. Nothing surprises her."

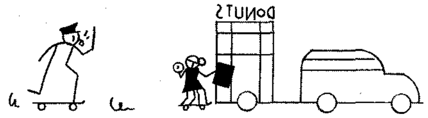
"It must be odd to live out here in a new house with all this around you."

Jerry looked at the house again, as if he hadn't considered that. "We thought we'd move in with her, since our house got ruint. But they gave me a transfer up north, and I ain't turning that down. My wife wants to stay on down here. But . . ." He didn't finish.

"How does Ginny feel?"

"She's ready to go." Jerry ran his hand down his sweaty arm—the one with the tattoo. It was impossibly hot, and the sun felt as if it was shining straight down onto them. Walter's suit jacket was wet through. "Kids don't care," Jerry said. "It's a game to them."

"That might be true," Walter said.



"You know anything good about Wisconsin?"

"It's on a lake," Walter said. "It gets cold. The Packers are from there."

Jerry said, "I'm starting to be worried about all that cold."

"They have seasons up there, though," Walter said. "That's a plus. We don't really have those down here. You might learn to like it."

"O.K.," Jerry said, and paused to think about that idea. "I went in the Navy in Chicago, but that was in the summertime."

And then they were silent and motionless again, while the girls conferred and walked a few yards farther down the street, their arms around each other's waists. They had last things to impart, things even more private than before.

"So, how're *you* doin'?" Jerry said. The two women on the scorching porch turned and walked in through the front door of the bright-blue house. The newly hung door slammed with a sucking sound. The air-conditioner at the back hummed smoothly—a noise Walter hadn't noticed.

"How am I doing about what?" Walter said.

"Well." Jerry smiled at him amiably. "Whatever you're all about. Whatever's up. You know? You hangin' in there?"

Walter looked down the street at his daughter, in her blue uniform skirt and her kneesocks and her glasses. She had a lock of Ginny's black hair in her hand—just the spidery tips—and was holding it, not pulling it, just holding it.

"I'm hangin' in," Walter said. "I guess that's what I'm doing."

"O.K., there you go," Jerry said and kept smiling and then also looked down toward the girls—lost now in each other's past and present.

Walter saw Jerry's hand extended, ready to be shaken, he guessed, with the same not quite firm grip.

"Good to meet you," Walter said, almost suddenly.

"I gotta get to loadin' my shit before it gets dark. We're leaving quick as I'm done."

"Absolutely," Walter said. "Have a safe trip." Behind him his hand found the over-warm car door handle. He smiled at Jerry, whose last name he didn't know. It might not be Baxter. There hadn't been enough time for that.

"I'll make it to Memphis this evening," Jerry said, starting to walk toward the shiny black van. "Be to Wisconsin tomorrow. Be to work for the next day."

"Great," Walter said.

"If it ain't snowin'."

"It won't be."

"O.K., then," Jerry said, continuing on across the new driveway toward the raised house, going for more boxes to load.

Walter looked up and down the street, as if he needed something new to capture his attention, something to occupy him for the time he would be here now. Far down Charbonnet, where the men in white helmets were working on the light pole, he saw a police car turn on to the street and begin slowly toward him. It would be best to get in the car, he thought, turn on the A.C., and wait for the children to finish their goodbyes. Better to attract less attention here.

In the chilled car, Louise sat with her legs crossed again and her hands in her lap and seemed entirely pleased with herself.

"Things worked out very well with Ginny," she announced, watching the demolished neighborhood glide past her window. They were at a point where it was possible to see the city center, far away, as if across a desert floor or an ocean—the bank buildings, the new hotels, the office towers that had not been toppled by the hurricane. The city—the middle where Walter worked—always seemed to be where it shouldn't when you saw it from a distance. The river deceived you. Once he had flown in from the west and the plane had banked so that for a moment he could see straight down the river's sinuous course. And he'd thought, What a laughable mistake to put a city here. Nothing ever promised good for it.

"Did you do O.K. without a card?" Walter said. They were heading for their hilariously early dinner now. They would see Bill Murray later. Louise's mother was across the lake on Mitch Daigle's screen porch. He would be at work tomorrow. Things were coming back to regular.

"I did," Louise said confidently. Hot sunlight sparkled through the windshield.

"It might be a good lesson to learn," Walter said wearily. "You can put things best in your own words. It's harder, but it's better."

"Whatever," Louise said. "Or buy a better card. Or not go to Wal-Mart, which was my idea, which I'm sorry about. Or not have any friends."

"All those things are possible," Walter said.

"Do you think it's also possible that *I* could move, too?" Louise said. "Pretty soon?" Life's inevitable subtractions were ganging up, he understood. Loss becoming the presence they'd heard about.

"Would you like to move to Wisconsin?" Walter said. "Where you could live on a glacial lake surrounded by conifer forests, and go to a country school and learn to canoe and memorize the legends of the Chippewa and all your classmates would say 'Golly' and 'Jeez Louise'? Is that what you're considering?" He looked at his daughter hopefully and reached across and touched her shoulder to indicate he wasn't making fun of her, and that, indeed, many things were likely to become possible, and it wouldn't hurt to think that way.

"No," Louise said. "I was thinking about going to Italy or maybe to China. And going alone. And not coming back. And never seeing anybody that I know today ever again."

"Would that include me?" Walter said.

"And Mother, too, probably," Louise said, and gave him a look of cold implacable certainty. A look that saw the future.

And for an instant, then, Walter experienced a sensation of something being about to happen around him. It wasn't clear what. But a sensation of impendment. Neither good nor bad. Though it also occurred to him that if he could just pause in his thinking now, not follow his thoughts any further, just breathe, then this sensation would in all likelihood develop into nothing bad. So that he went on with driving back toward the center of the city, rising in the steamy distance of the late afternoon. He would make no more efforts to answer Louise's childish questions about Italy and China. No words were really the right words to answer with. In a day he'd forget all this. This was a smart child—Louise—but not smart beyond her years. She would forget many things, too. ♦

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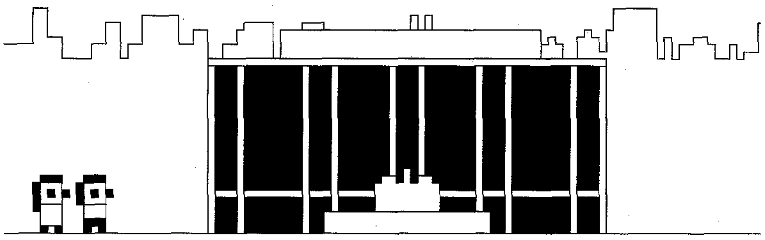

POP MUSIC

AMY'S CIRCUS

The strange power of junkie retro soul.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Is there anything surprising about Amy Winehouse's being awarded five Grammys this month? A cynic might say that her ability to stay alive is startling, but Winehouse's worrying series of relapses and collapses could simply be a trick of the light. Actors and singers were misbehaving vigorously before the advent of radio; Winehouse may seem like such a dedicated tearaway because the lens recording her movements is wider than anything a sixties celebrity would have encountered, doesn't switch off, and continually feeds a twenty-four-hour newsstand. (Winehouse is one of the five or six celebrities—mostly women—whose every action has been "serialized," to borrow the phrase Harvey Levin used to describe the coverage of Britney Spears on his Web site, TMZ.com.) Winehouse's misadventures—walking in London barefoot in her bra at dawn, spitting on the set of a TV game show, drawing blood in a "spat" with her husband, Blake Fielder-Civil, being filmed smoking what appeared to be crack, heckling Bono during an awards ceremony, stints in rehabilitation facilities—support the tired (if true) template of the Genius Junkie, a story you can find, if determined. But the miserable-circus part of Winehouse's story unfolded largely in the second half of 2007, well after "Back to Black"—the album that won all the Grammys—had become a hit. It has now sold 1.6 million copies in America, and had won Winehouse several awards in England—including the MOBO (Music of Black Origin) for Best U.K. Female—before the Grammys swooped in with their golden stickers.

Winehouse's self-destructiveness isn't a plausible explanation for her popularity, or her awards, no matter how easily it converts into press. With the producers Mark Ronson and Salaam Remi, she made a very popular album that looks firmly, and directly, backward. "Back to Black" is a deft and convincing pastiche of the girl groups of the sixties, the jazz singers of the forties, and a variety of rhythms from the seventies and the nineties. (The eighties get a pass.) It's an entertaining, clever album that benefits from a strategy that makes everyone who isn't Miles Davis look good: it's only thirty-five minutes long (and closer to thirty without the bonus track). "Back to Black" is a modified sixties soul album, with one perfect single (the ubiquitous "Rehab," which allows Winehouse to celebrate, make fun of, and justify her own substance abuse), sung and written by a twenty-four-year-old girl from Southgate, London, who says she has the musical taste of "an old Jewish man" and wears her hair in a vertical pile she refers to as "my hive." (Is there a TMZ video of anyone else arranging her hair in public? Winehouse is the Marge Simpson of junkie retro soul.) Her label—only doing its job—describes her as "the most talented and important musical artist of her generation," which would seem like space-cake hyperbole if so many people didn't seem to agree, at least a little.

Yet what reads as musical innovation in 2008 is blue-ribbon revivalism, a high-production-value version of the songbook logic driving current Broadway musicals. The sounds of yesteryear! Sung by today's young people! (Who, in this case, enjoy ketamine and margaritas.) Winehouse's music is reassuring to those old enough to remember the original and novel to those too young to know. And her music refers to rappers while simultaneously avoiding actual rapping and sounding just like the music that rappers first sampled decades ago. So many demographics united through the magic of consumption!

"Back to Black" has grown on me since its domestic release, last year. At first, I reacted badly to what I took as mere imitation, but Winehouse and her crew execute their homage with class and understated force, a quality that overrides—for now—the perils of heavy borrowing. Mark Ronson's arrangements are knowing; the quick rhythm changes in "Rehab" are unobtrusive but urge the song along and make it easily replayable. This decision alone might have earned Ronson his Producer of the Year Grammy, though there are at least five other producers who deserved it, too. (This is an age of producers.) And hearing a live band working in tight unison with a good singer is a reliable pleasure. The central production conceit is in the voice, though; listen hard to Winehouse's singing, and you will hear the odd combinations that make "Back to Black" more than skilled aping.

I bought Winehouse's first album, "Frank," in 2004 at a Heathrow Airport music kiosk. I listened to it on the plane home and dropped it in a garbage can on the way to baggage claim. "Frank" was Winehouse being showy before her voice could raise the curtain: she sounds thin, misses notes, and lacks any specific character. As sixties soul grounds "Back to Black," "Frank" was tied to a denatured version of jazz vocals, sung by someone channelling Lauryn Hill and resorting to wobbly

ABOVE: TIBOR KÁRPÁTI

Winehouse's voice can sound like aural blackface, but her range and variety resist definition. Photograph by Harry Benson.

flourishes when stuck for an idea. (The lyrics employed curse words to show that Winehouse wasn’t, like, square, a charge that she will never have to worry about again.) The singing style heard on “Frank” started years ago—Lauryn Hill, the dopey singer-songwriter Jewel, and Joni Mitchell are all glossed in this approach—and has filtered down through singers like Nelly Furtado, Winehouse, and a currently rising star, Sia. (“Frank” sounds a bit like a drunken Furtado working a piano bar without the benefit of a decent songbook.) This style provides a way of singing derivations of black music without resembling modern R. & B. In fact, avoiding the sound of current R. & B. may be its guiding principle. White singers generally seem to use it more than black singers, though it is open to anyone who wants to use its limited vocabulary.

“Back to Black” also sounds nothing like current R. & B., but chooses rich, older source material; Winehouse’s collaboration with Ronson catalyzed her songwriting, and a radical change in her vocals pushes the album. Her tone is darker, the control is infinitely stronger, and her range sounds as if it had gained an entire lower octave. And then there’s the accent, which isn’t simply the Southgate speaking voice that makes “cool” sound like “coal.” Winehouse’s singing sounds, even to a nonpolitical ear, like some sort of blackface. She slurs words and drops consonants; you hear “dat” and “dis” in place of “that” and “this” several times. Is “Back to Black” meant to be literal?

The musicians on the record are drawn largely from a band of New York soul revivalists called the Dap-Kings. For many of Winehouse’s shows, including the one I saw at Highline Ballroom last May, the Dap-Kings serve as her live band. (The Dap-Kings also work with Sharon Jones, a fiery fifty-one-year-old singer from Georgia, who is building a body of work based on sixties soul. Jones & Co. are faithfully re-creating the sound of Lyn Collins, a singer who was produced by and played with James Brown. Watching the two singers with the same band is like a controlled experiment. Live, there is no contest. Winehouse can be iffy, but Sharon Jones and the band invariably hit their marks hard and with gusto.)

Pop has room for weird appropriations, even if they don’t always settle or become comfortable. Winehouse 2.0 works because of the number of different modes that she and her band pile up and the way that she resists definition. Ronson directs the band to stay firmly in the territory of Detroit and Memphis soul, but Winehouse is free to roam through Sarah Vaughan’s lower range and Lauryn Hill’s rapturous, disjunct leaps. Winehouse and her band play what sounds like a straight James Brown ballad from the fifties called “Me and Mr. Jones”; the Mr. in the title, though, is not a dapper ballroom dancer or long-lost love—it’s the rapper Nas, whom she claims she can’t be kept apart from. The lyrics are genuinely obscure; someone has made Winehouse miss a “Slick Rick concert.” Later, she sings that “ ’side from Sammy, you’re my best black Jew.” Sammy is almost certainly Mr. Davis, Jr., but the “you” isn’t likely Nas, as he isn’t Jewish. Go figure. Perhaps it’s a jokey reference to her husband, who may have prevented her from seeing the show in the first place. The old Jews and blacks romp, mysteriously.

Winehouse’s delivery, though—take a little time to suss that one out. It isn’t really straight minstrelsy, because her inflections and phonemes don’t add up to any known style. Listen to the mid-tempo shuffle “You Know I’m No Good” and hear how she elongates and deforms the word “worst.” Is she channelling a little-known blues singer? Is she hammered? This mush-mouthed approach is Winehouse’s real innovation—a mangling of language that will pull you in, especially when you want to hear the words. One effective summing up of her style can be seen in a YouTube video of her performing the album’s title track, labelled “Amy Winehouse performing drunk or high. Your guess!” It may be neither—it is Winehouse’s signature, and if she can detach it from the past and keep writing songs like “Rehab” there will be nothing surprising about having her around for a long time. Other than having her around. ♦

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BOOKS

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

Fugitive lives by Peter Carey and Hari Kunzru.

BY JAMES WOOD

Ever since the attack on the World Trade Center, we have all heard a lot about "the Professor," the chilling anarchist in Conrad's "The Secret Agent," who walks around with a bomb strapped to himself and one hand on the detonator. Far more attention has been paid to this ruthless fanatic—unsuggestively reprised by Cormac McCarthy as Anton Chigurh, in "No Country for Old Men"—than to Verloc, the harried, soft, pithless entity who is the novel's actual protagonist. But Verloc is more interesting than the Professor because he is so much less confident. The Professor is an arrow; Verloc is a target, helplessly bearing the gouges of the various assaults made on him. He works for the anarchists, but he also works against them, as a double agent; he is despised by his handler at the embassy, and feels bullied into following the diplomat's order to blow up the Greenwich Observatory, a job that he fatally bungles; he is a minor London shopkeeper, who sells pornography under the table; he moves through his shabby domestic existence sluggishly, as if under water.

Verloc is vivid because he is trapped—"with his features swollen and an air of being drugged." The sticky web of accident has caught him. But recent American fiction dealing with Islamic terrorists has shown more interest in the fanatic than in the failure, in resolution than in irresolution, and a certain human complexity has been sacrificed. Two new novels, Peter Carey's "His Illegal Self" (Knopf; $24.95) and Hari Kunzru's "My Revolutions" (Dutton; $25.95), both set in the radical underground of late-sixties and early-seventies agitation, have at their centers characters who find themselves politically trapped. Neither is by an American—Carey is Australian and Kunzru British—and neither is about Islamic terrorists, though both can perhaps be understood as necessary novelistic transferences, displacements from contemporary ideological radicalism. The novels share an interest in the slow rotting of the ideological harvest, and in the way that eventual political failure was birthed by the very exaggeration of political success. "What would freedom look like?" is the recurrent question of Kunzru's book, and the author seems to half enjoy, half lament the inability of any of the agitators and terrorists in the novel to provide a convincing answer.

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Carey and Kunzru share an interest in the sordid decay of radical purity.

Carey's often beautiful novel, one of his best recent works, has the bruising tang of all his fiction, in which crooked colloquialism (frequently Australian vernacular), and poetic formality combine. The result is brilliantly vital: the world bulges out of the sentences. A man is described as "not hurrying, but prancy in bare feet." A boy feels "squiffy in the stomach." A beat-up car has a "busted sunken boneless backseat."An Upper East Side matron brings back to her apartment her "powdery friends from the English-Speaking Union." An Australian shack has a veranda "where bats hung like broken rags." When the novel's heroine is unhappy, her mouth turns down: "She didn't know he saw that, the way the whole of her lower face could lose its bones."

One of the secrets of Carey's capabilities as a storyteller is a serious commitment to what is known as free indirect style, or the bending of third-person narrative around the viewpoint of the character who is being described. The sentences above are written in the implied voice of a little boy: it is he who feels squiffy, he who finds his grandmother's friends powdery, he who thinks that a downturned mouth looks as if it had lost its bones. A child is here decoding the universe, and the novelist expects the reader to decode that child's inventive solutions. It is characteristic of Carey to throw us into the depths of his sentences and let us swim for ourselves. On the second page of his novel, we encounter this:

> Grandma Selkirk was what they call an Upper East Side woman—cheekbones, tailored gray hair—but that was not what she called herself. I am the last bohemian, she liked to say, to the boy, particularly, meaning that no one told her what to do, at least not since Pa Selkirk had thrown the Buddha out the window and gone to live with the Poison Dwarf.

We know next to nothing about the boy or his grandmother, and absolutely nothing about why a Buddha was thrown out the window or who the Poison Dwarf is—but we are caught by a voice, and held for the next two hundred pages.

The boy is Che Selkirk, given his provoking first name by his privileged, radical parents, members of S.D.S., who have disappeared into the underground and are among America's most wanted domestic terrorists. He is almost eight in 1972, when the novel opens, has never known his father, and has not seen his mother, Susan Selkirk, since he was two. The formidable Grandma Selkirk, who insists on calling him Jay, has been raising him, and has secured for her grandson the "Victorian" consolations of bourgeois comfort in Manhattan and a summer house in upstate New York, on Kenoza Lake: "It would always be summer, in his memory, the roadsides dense with goldenrod and the women from the village coming to steal the white hydrangeas just like their mothers stole before them. The geese would be heading up to Canada and the Boeings spinning their white contrails across the cold blue sky—loneliness and hope, expanding like paper flowers in water."

Everything changes when Anna Xenos, nicknamed Dial, turns up one day at Grandma Selkirk's apartment, on East Sixty-second Street, to collect Che for a meeting with his mother. Dial was the boy's nanny when he was a baby, and she and Susan were Radcliffe students together. Permitted to take the boy for an hour, she follows increasingly obscure commands from Susan and "the Movement," and ends up first in Philadelphia and then in California. Che, having no visual memory of his mother, assumes that Dial is she, and a painful irony is set in motion. What Carey calls "the dark strength of the misunderstanding" will persist for more than half the book, because Dial does not have the courage to disenchant this "lovely little boy," with his "perfect little boy legs, falling socks, banged-up shin and expensive sweater made from merino sheep, the face, the father's face, dear Jesus."

What is fine about the book is the careful fidelity that Carey shows to Dial and Che. There is, of course, not one large misunderstanding but a hive of smaller misunderstandings, and Carey briskly evokes them. Again, his use of free indirect style makes him at once daring and economical—a line or two of battered error will do better than paragraphs of perfected comprehension. For instance, when Dial takes Che on the subway, where he has never been, to Grand Central, Carey captures the shock of it all—the cars swaying and screeching, "thick teams of brutal cables showing in the windowed dark," the shuttle train "painted like a warrior." It is all done in a few short paragraphs, which culminate in this: "He was underground, as Cameron in 5D had predicted. They will come for you, man. They'll break you out of here." Cameron Fox, we discover a few pages later, is a neighbor, "the son of the art dealers in 5D. He had been expelled from Groton on account of the hair he would not cut, maybe something else as well." The novelty of the actual Manhattan underground and the childish fondling of the glamorous word "underground," about which Che has heard so much, wonderfully meet in a single, uncomprehending sentence that is both funny and forlorn.

The book is in general funny and forlorn, because it is a chronicle of mishaps and accidents and peculiar will-lessness—it has that Verloc-like "air of being drugged." Anna Xenos, a scholarship girl from South Boston, should not be running across the country with a boy whom she has essentially kidnapped. She has a new job as an assistant professor at Vassar, and, besides, she has never really liked the posh, fanatical Susan Selkirk: "Crumbelina, Dial had called her, secretly of course. Crumbelina had smeared butter across the countertops in Somerville. She could not make a bed, let alone a revolution." She hates the bourgeois stiffness of Che's grandmother. She is loyal to the Movement, and takes her orders from it, but doesn't really know why, save out of curiosity. The Movement has, in effect, set her up. She has been used to abduct the child. But in Philadelphia she discovers that Susan Selkirk has blown herself up, and suddenly she, Dial, becomes the boy's sole guardian.

She cannot return the boy to his grandmother, because she will be arrested for abduction; and she has encouraged the boy to think that he will be reunited with his father. So the two go on the run, and Dial finds herself joining Che's father on the F.B.I.'s list of wanted fugitives. She laments the hole she has climbed into. She feels like a "sucker." The novel burrows into the separate and often separated perspectives of this strange dyad,

NEAR FIELD

This is not something new or kept secret
the tilled ground unsown in late spring
the dead are not separate from the living
each has one foot in the unknown
and cannot speak for the other
the field tells none of its turned story
it lies under its low cloud like a waiting river
the dead made this out of their hunger
out of what they had been told
out of the pains and shadows
and bowels of animals
out of turning and
coming back singing
about another time

—*W. S. Merwin*

Dial and Che. For Che, the flight is a drastic adventure, in which the complications internally suffered and pondered by Dial are boyishly simplified: happy that he is finally with his mother, he waits every day to be united with his father. For him, the best thing about the trip across America is the motels. But everything is ultimately confusing, and the boy must become expert at his own kind of detection: "Plans have changed, she said, getting all busy with a cigarette."

"His Illegal Self" is written in very short chapters, some as brief as a single page. The action is tightly edited, and the sentences jerk us forward like a leash. There are no quotation marks. Carey needs this never-apologize-never-explain form, not least because he decides to send his errant couple to Australia, not quite credibly. (Why not Mexico?) But Australia only improves his already vital prose, and gives him a new source of comedy. Dial and Che end up in a wild area north of Brisbane, where a hippie commune runs a collection of shacks, "up a dirt track at the asshole of the earth." The locals don't care much for the American interlopers, and the American adult does not even know that Australia is involved in the Vietnam War. "She had no idea of what Australia even *was*. She would not have imagined a tomato would grow in Australia, or a cucumber. She could not have named a single work of Australian literature or music." A semi-savage dropout named Trevor looks after them, and with his help a local lawyer, Phil Warriner, is deputed to travel to the States, to communicate with Che's grandmother about the boy's safe return. But Dial's first sight of the way-out Phil is not inspiring (and, indeed, he proves a useless emissary). He insists on removing all his clothes: "Phil sat his rain-wet backside on the dusty floor and took out a yellow pad and asked them questions and Dial looked him steadily in the eyes, anything to avoid the penis which was peeking between his crossed legs like a mushroom."

For Che, the Australian bush is novel and familiar—he becomes again the explorer at Kenoza Lake. Carey has always been a quick-eyed observer of the child's world: this is the energy that propels sections of novels like "Bliss" and "The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith," and which revels in the boyish escapades of Ned Kelly, the Australian outlaw, in "True

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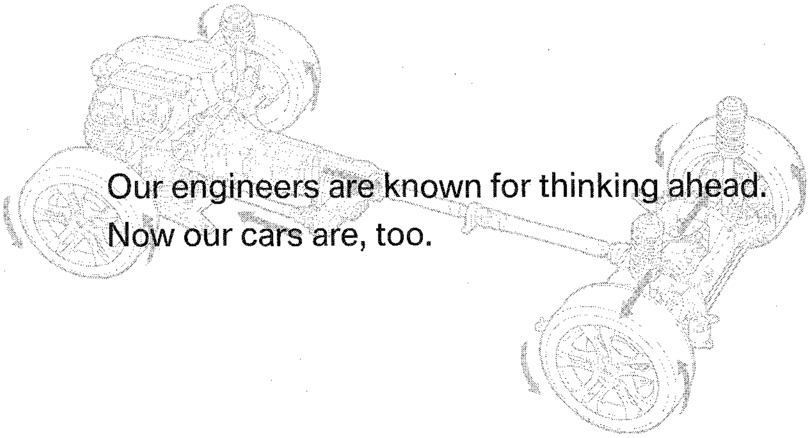

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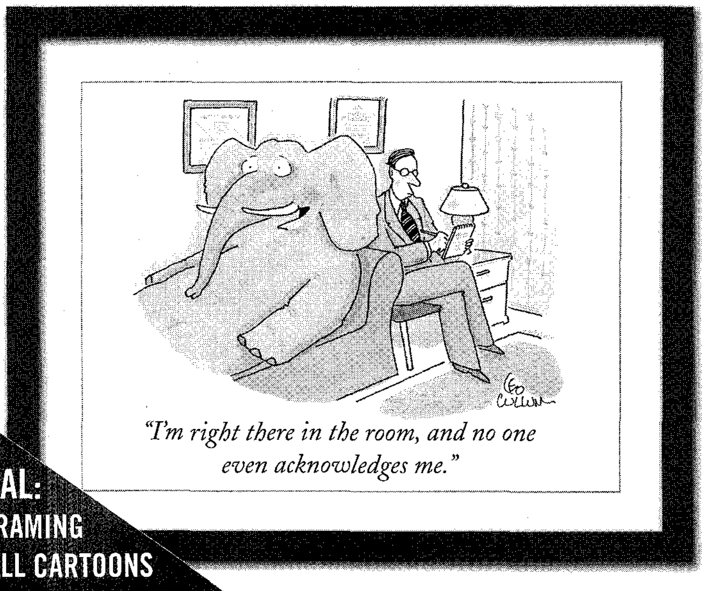

"I'm right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me."

Leo Cullum, 2006

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History of the Kelly Gang." Through Che, Carey writes something like an exile's ode to Australia (Carey has lived for nearly twenty years in Manhattan), to the "rabbit's fur cloud" and "the weird broken teeth of the Glass House Mountains shoving out of the prickly bush below the velvet sky" and the cry of the Australian magpie, "like nothing else on earth. Who was it who said like an angel gargling in a crystal vase?"

Carey's novel is determinedly unpolitical—to a political degree. It may appear to harbor a conservative disdain for the spoiled ambitions of nineteen-seventies radicalism. It is, after all, a novel about not a would-be victor but an absolute victim, and a very young one at that. The pressure—inherent, in some ways, in Carey's loving notation of nature—to contrast natural beauty and longevity with ephemeral, venal human machinations has a reactionary history (it is called "pastoral"). But the novel does not feel like an indictment; it hugs the flanks of its characters and their largely unearned vicissitudes. A brief book, it leaves Dial and Che dangling in 1973, and offers no sorrowful or complacent ideological update. This was then, the book merely says, and what a lot of madness there was, some of it real and some of it manufactured: "She had wild hair but she was not wild and no matter what *Time* magazine said about her so-called generation she had only made love to one man in her life."

"My Revolutions" is dense and accumulative where "His Illegal Self" is fleeting and photographic, and, unlike Carey, Hari Kunzru is explicitly interested in the connections between our current and former ideological selves. His subtle title refers not only to the fervor of the late nineteen-sixties but, more searchingly, to the ideological compromises that quondam radicals have made in the past few years. His narrator, Chris Carver, has been living a life of quiet deception in a small English town, under the name Michael Frame. Thirty years before, he was a soldier in a radical cell committed to the overturning of British society. He eventually broke with the faction, alienated by its willingness to commit indiscriminate violence, and informed on his allies. One day, an unwelcome acquaintance, Miles Bridgeman, hails him in the street. Bridgeman first met Carver in prison, after a demonstration in 1968; thirty years later, he is the possessor of a great deal of sensitive information, and Carver, who has a wife and a stepdaughter, as well as his assumed identity, will do almost anything to keep Bridgeman quiet about the past.

It takes the rest of the novel, which moves seamlessly between the London of the late nineteen-sixties and England and France on the lip of the millennium, to show us that Bridgeman was a secret agent of a kind, and that he is prepared to blackmail Carver with exposure to get what he wants. Another Conrad novel, "Under Western Eyes," perhaps sits behind Kunzru's. Bridgeman could well say to Carver what the terrifying Councillor Mikulin says to Razumov, the student who gets caught up in revolutionary activities, and is then used as a double agent by the Russian government: "You are going away free as air, but you shall end by coming back to us." Unlike Carey's Dial, Chris Carver was a true believer, at least for a while. Yet it seems that he can never escape the group he once belonged to, even if the ambassador of his nemesis is not a member of the group but a murky figure on its fringes.

"My Revolutions" is a strange, involving book, powerful in its utterly unembarrassed relation to the mundane. At first, one would like it to be a little more embarrassed: the prose seems unwilling to bestir itself. Here Kunzru describes a march on the American Embassy, in Grosvenor Square:

> Up close, coming toward you, police horses are bigger than you could imagine. Facing the metal-shod hoofs, the jangling harnesses, wild eyes, and flaring nostrils, you know how it must have felt to be a serf in a medieval battle. The wall of flour-spattered blue tunics in front of the embassy parted and the horses charged into us, kicking up clods of turf, their riders standing up in the stirrups to add force to their baton blows. There was no pretense in that charge. It was about unleashing as much violence as possible. People were thrashing about on the ground. I saw a girl trapped beneath a horse, desperately trying to cover her head with her hands. The horse reared up, almost unseating its rider, a red-faced sergeant with a toothbrush moustache.

This is not really vivid enough, and the medieval aspect of horses is a too familiar picture, not helped by the fact that Kunzru returns to the idea twenty pages later. ("Then they charged us with the horses and the scene turned medieval.") The red-faced sergeant with his toothbrush mustache belongs with the judge who puts Chris away for six weeks after he is arrested: "a lantern-jawed man with a drinker's swollen nose." And they belong, in turn, with background filler of this order: "There were coffee bars with rows of scooters parked outside. The amplified clatter of beat bands punched its way out of cellars."

"My Revolutions" does not have the brittle elegance of Dana Spiotta's spectacular novel about American radicalism of the nineteen-seventies, "Eat the Document." But the novel is narrated by Chris Carver, who is nothing if not ordinary, and I suspect that Kunzru is using his narrator to sink the reader into the unaesthetic here and now. Kunzru's first novel, "The Impressionist," a kind of postcolonial picaresque, showed that he can do more or less what he wants with language, as a wonderful little surge of bleak precision, late in "My Revolutions," demonstrates: a horrid English café is described as displaying "prosthetic-pink iced buns lying like hospital patients under the glass of the counter."

Peter Carey wants to paint the world; Kunzru wants to lay it bare, and the great success of his probing and finally moving book is the way he rebuilds the late nineteen-sixties, piece by irregular piece. His narrator is as bland as Evelyn Waugh's Charles Ryder, but is properly stripped of the distraction of Waugh's "fine writing" (which, awkwardly, is Ryder's, too, since he narrates "Brideshead Revisited"). Moreover, one of Kunzru's themes is that everything looks secondhand to Carver. As he watches the police in Grosvenor Square, "everything seemed to be happening at a distance, on a screen." When he tries to visualize what the future will look like, everything he sees "looked like an advertisement." The leader of his terrorist cell, Sean, warns him, "Always stay in your movie."

This unflustered embrace of banality results in a historical portrait of London that must be unparalleled in contemporary British fiction. The wildness, the fanaticism, the sex and drugs are all there, of course, and are familiar from memoirs and film, but much more unusual are the drab, comic, fugitive facts, like the West London squats, the unheated rooms, the hangers-on and the spongers, and the foggy, inchoate ambition: "Something was happening in the world and, whatever it was, we were going to be in the middle of it."

Chris Carver's group decides that it must bomb strategic buildings, like banks, a construction company with a contract to build new prisons, and, eventually, the unlovely obelisk-like Post Office Tower, in Central London. There is a very funny scene in which Chris and his sometime lover, Anna, pose as respectable suburbanites at the fancy revolving restaurant on the top floor of the tower. They have a bomb in a bag, but before they can plant it they must eat dinner. It is precisely in character that Chris should angrily obsess about the menu, which he deems "phoney and French, snobbishly printed without translation. Screw you if you don't know the difference between *consommé au paillettes* and *crème à la reine*. All the luxuries can be had at the top of the tower."

This is a novel of considerable political subtlety. One of its persistent concerns is essentially theological; that is to say, what will Heaven look like? This is the worldly eschatology of utopianism, not the messianism of religious believers, but the necessary category of Heaven is shared by both secularists and religionists. And no one can answer Chris's question. Finally, near the end of the book, Anna bursts out, "Can't you see . . . that the future's not for us? . . . Look at how we live. . . . We're damaged people. There would be no place for us in the world we're trying to build." It is the saddest passage in the book, and one of devastating insight.

Karl Kraus famously called the historian a prophet facing backward. Kunzru's historical novel looks both ways, too. Thirty years after the events he is recalling for us, Chris Carver is still radical, and not at all post-ideological, despite his cloaked rustication in the mild English provinces. But perhaps the Labour Government of late-twentieth-century Britain, some of whose members once drifted in and out of the same radical world as Chris, is indeed now post-ideological. When Miles Bridgeman wallows in the end of history, and chirps, "Ideology's dead now. Everyone pretty much agrees on how to run things," the novel seems to vibrate with an anger that is Kunzru's own, miraculously trained on an era before he was born. ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

A Person of Interest, *by Susan Choi (Viking; $24.95).* Choi's dazzling third novel follows the pattern established by her second, that of imagining a character on the sidelines of real historical events—in this case, the hunt for a Unabomber-like terrorist. Lee is a surly Asian-American mathematics professor, who, twice divorced and estranged from his only daughter, has spent his life at a drab state school in the Midwest, a place "only recently somewhat renowned" for a popular computer-science professor, Rick Hendley, whose office is next door to Lee's. When Hendley is killed by a mail bomb, Lee becomes a "person of interest" to the F.B.I., and a suspenseful confrontation in the Idaho mountains ensues. But the story's true focus is Lee's fraught sense of his past: a friend whose wife he stole, his failure to achieve youthful ambitions, his "immigrant's sense of hopeless illegitimacy and impending exposure."

The Age of Shiva, *by Manil Suri (Norton; $24.95).* Coming of age in Delhi in the fifties, Meera takes her father's atheism and progressive attitudes for granted, but she keenly resents the tyrannies of her favored older sister, who forces Meera to play the go-between in her romance with the handsome Dev. When Dev is dumped for a more suitable fiancé, Meera rashly attempts to console him; soon she is stuck with yet another of her sister's hand-me-downs—this time, forever. Dev drinks too much, and his family lives in a one-bedroom flat by the railroad tracks. Only when Meera conceives a child will she truly have something to call her own. Suri's second novel is a sensuous, nuanced portrait of motherhood, but it also sparks with the frictions of being female in an India where television soaps and political slogans compete noisily with Hindu myth. Here a wife may find herself eating the scraps off her husband's plate one day and spitting on him the next.

Charlatan, *by Pope Brock (Crown; $24.95).* In the nineteen-twenties and thirties, John R. Brinkley was one of the most famous, and richest, medical men in America, with advocates including Vice-President Charles Curtis. The basis of his empire was an impotence cure that entailed crudely transplanted goat testicles. In 1930, documenting forty-two deaths at Brinkley's surgery, the medical board of Kansas revoked his license. Brinkley responded with a campaign for governor and another decade of malpractice. Brock captures the shamelessness and adaptability that make Brinkley fascinating, and details his genuine contributions, none of which involve medicine; on XERA, the "border blaster" radio station that he opened in Mexico to peddle his cures and his dubious politics out of the reach of regulators, he gave acts like the Carter Family a national audience, hiring them to sing between his sales pitches.

African American National Biography, *edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Oxford; $995).* The editors preface their presentation of forty-one hundred biographies in eight volumes by noting that, until recently, the Dictionary of American Biography included just a hundred and twenty African-Americans, while black biographical dictionaries have been unabashedly hagiographic. A more thorough historical approach continually reminds us of the troubles of even iconic figures: Jesse Owens, after his Olympic triumphs, goes bankrupt in the laundry business and then has a stint supervising black workers at Ford. Most fascinating, perhaps, are lives known only piecemeal, often through the records of slave owners. Cotton Mather's "pretty Intelligent Fellow" Onesimus taught his owner an African method of smallpox inoculation, but disappears from the record once Mather, complaining that he "grows useless, Froward and Immorigerous," let him buy his freedom.

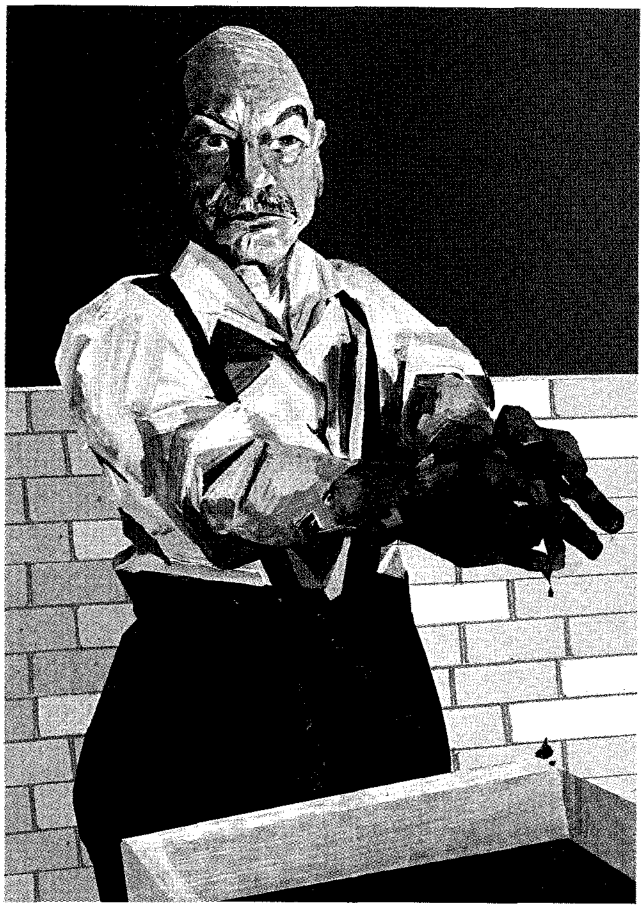
THE THEATRE

THE HAUNTED

"Macbeth" and "Sunday in the Park with George."

BY JOHN LAHR

Among the many contemporary things that Shakespeare's "Macbeth" exploited in its day—the accession to the throne of the first Scottish king of the British Isles; the King's fascination with witchcraft; the climate of terror that followed the Gunpowder Plot to blow up Parliament—the most significant for us is the Elizabethan public's newly acquired appetite for hair-raising eloquence. "It was addicted, one might say, to the fortissimo eloquence of inner lives magnificently tortured," Ted Hughes writes, in his introduction to "The Essential Shakespeare." To the verbalization of tragic frenzy, Rupert Goold's inspired modern-dress Stalinist version of "Macbeth" (starring Patrick Stewart, at BAM's Harvey Theatre) adds a scenic and sonic frenzy that is symphonic in its orchestration and its penetration. Goold's brilliant production team—with Adam Cork's soundscape; Lorna Heavey's smash-cut video and projections; Howard Harrison's moody lighting design; Anthony Ward's brutalist set—unsettles the senses and sets the stage for the deracinated and the uncanny. It infuses Macbeth's crepuscular world with the kind of fear that makes your tongue taste of brass.



Patrick Stewart in Shakespeare's play, directed by Rupert Goold.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

At a thrilling first stroke, with the clatter and cries of a wounded soldier being wheeled in on a stretcher, the play bursts the somnolence of a dingy field ward—linoleum, white tiles, an iron-gated upstage elevator, a washbasin whose spigots will in time run red with blood. We are thrust into the heart-stopping hurly-burly that Shakespeare's prologue merely prophesies. The walls flicker with projections of a flatlining soldier's electrocardiogram printout. The Nursing Sisters hover. With sanitary face masks over their mouths and noses and starched wimples on their heads, which make them look like bustling predatory birds—one of them even holds a hacksaw—they swoop around the traumatized soldier as he babbles news of battle and of Macbeth's military bravery.

The audience is shocked to discover that the Nursing Sisters are Shakespeare's witchy Weird Sisters, who greet Macbeth in the ward with a prophecy of his rise to power, and who are all the more terrifying because they successfully masquerade as part of the ordinary world. "All hail, Macbeth!" they incant three times, promoting him in each prediction from "Thane of Glamis" to "Thane of Cawdor" and, finally, "That shalt be King hereafter." The words stop Macbeth in his tracks. "Good Sir, why do you start, and seem to fear Things that do sound so fair?" his cohort Banquo asks. In the witches' "imperial theme," Macbeth instantly recognizes his own murderous subterranean ambition: his self-destructive course is set. Traditionally, the Weird Sisters are staged as the Fates, and their scenes verge on Halloween voodoo. Goold stages the Sisters as their psychologically astute author intuited them to be—as incarnations of Macbeth's unconscious. In this production, the Sisters, spectres of the subversive, are rewoven into the entire fabric of Macbeth's saga; they ratchet up the atmosphere of menace, shadowing action with the unsaid and the uncontrolled.

Goold turns the Sisters into auguries of anxiety; they reflect and manufacture a dis-ease. They give off a whiff of the malign. Appearing in the kitchen as scullery maids (sometimes they wield real knives to cut meat; at others, they clutch imaginary ones), waiting table at Macbeth's feasts, they haunt Macbeth silently, as our unconscious haunts us. Even at the finale, when Macduff bundles "the butcher" into an elevator to kill him, the Sisters walk defiantly downstage and face the audience. They rule, and they know it.

As Macbeth, Patrick Stewart is masterly; he makes the character's journey from tentativeness to tyranny with unhistrionic aplomb. As a promoted war hero nearing the end of his career, Stewart cuts a trim, staunch, but older figure. He's easy in his body, he's sexual, and he's playful, which makes his outbursts all the more terrifying. But the age difference between him and Lady Macbeth (the fine, fierce Kate Fleetwood) raises the vexing issue of masculinity, and that works well for the complexity of Macbeth's balky bloodlust. When he first refuses to kill the king, Duncan ("I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition"), Lady Macbeth, all bony shoulders and barbarity, rounds on him. "When you durst do it, then you were a man," she says. "And, to be more than what you were, you would be so much more the man." As a killer, Macbeth has a lot to learn; at first, he forgets to plant the daggers on Duncan's guards, whom he's also killed, in order to frame them. But, over time, the arithmetic of his atrocity adds up to a scorched-earth policy.

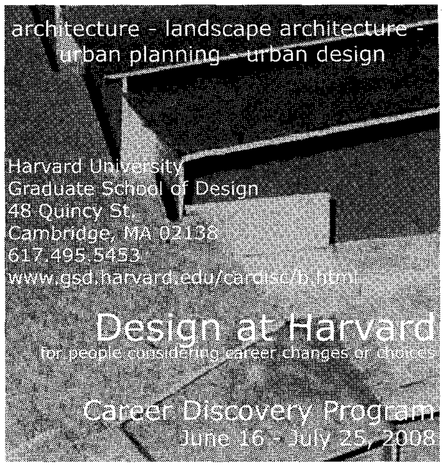
The murderous couple learn the rigor of masquerading their dead hearts. "False face must hide what the false heart doth know," Macbeth says. The impulse to dissimulate their deeds, to force all feeling underground, ultimately leads to madness. The unmoored Lady Macbeth sleepwalks with flashlight in hand. "She has light by her continually," an attendant says—a brilliant line suggesting a soul so lost that it fears not being found. Macbeth also has a psychotic break. Here, to emphasize both the external and the internal horror of his collapse, Goold plays Banquo's ghost scene twice. At the end of the first part, he appears as a gory nightmare vision, striding the length of the long dining tabletop to confront the agent of his doom, who falls off his chair in shock. At the opening of the second part, the scene is replayed as a dumb show without the ghost, a clever demonstration of Macbeth's splitting off of his guilt-ridden panic. But nothing suggests the dimension of the horror, "where violent sorrow seems a modern ecstasy," more powerfully than the daring silence of Macduff (the excellent Michael Feast). Upon learning that Macbeth has murdered his wife and three children, Macduff struggles to fathom a grief beyond words. After almost a minute of silence, he speaks. "My children, too," he says quietly.

Creators, like the painter Georges Seurat, as well as killers have "eaten on the insane root." In Stephen Sondheim's 1984 Pulitzer Prize-winning "Sunday in the Park with George" (revived at the Roundabout's Studio 54, and directed by Sam Buntrock), George (Daniel Evans), as the script annoyingly calls him, works away feverishly at his masterpiece, "A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte." He sings to himself, "Red Red Red Red, Red Red Orange, Red Red Orange, Orange Pick Up Blue." Of all the many eloquent lyric lines in the musical, these mad, staccato "trancelike" noodlings are the least likely to be quoted, but they are the truest expression of artistic obsession. In the ingenious first—and really only—act of this admirably ambitious but patchy musical, Sondheim and the playwright James Lapine adopt pointillist narrative techniques to make Seurat's search for a new, luminous form match their own quest for new musical shapes. George lives in his painting but not much in his life. (In this revival, standing behind a large scrim of canvas on which he works, he seems to merge with the painting visually; he is literally and figuratively in it.) Self-absorbed, passive, confused, detached from Dot (Jenna Russell), his coyly named model and mistress, who bears him a child, George makes a painting that is dynamic, but he is not, which is a big narrative hiccup in musical theatre.

In the show's great song "Finishing the Hat," which makes the rest of the first-act drama almost redundant, Sondheim demonstrates the haunted artist teasing out of his unconscious his poetic other voice:

> Studying the hat,
> Entering the world of the hat,
> Reaching though the world of the hat
> Like a window back to this one from
>   that.

Abstraction, not characterization, drives "Sunday in the Park with George," whose focus is on art, not people. The show signals Sondheim's departure from story to theory, the freighting of his later musicals with more intellectual baggage than they can successfully carry. In Sam Buntrock's lively revival, the novelty of digital animation substitutes for the novelty of the musical's original innovation. But nothing can reanimate the strained, deadly second act, which imagines Seurat's contemporary relative, also named George, also a stick figure, also an artist who works in light. Here, however, in Sondheim's self-congratulatory portentousness, the character gives off not light so much as a sort of cultural gas. ♦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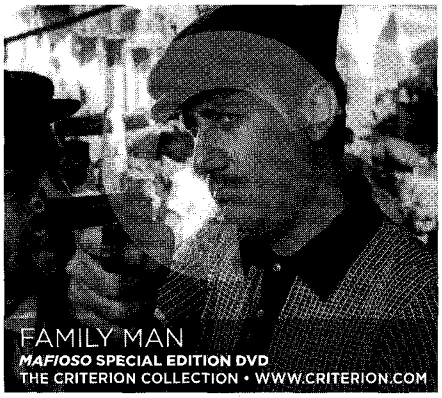
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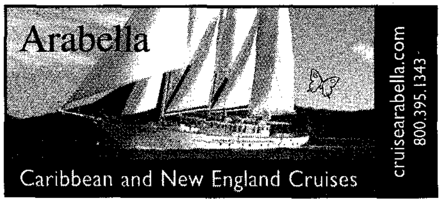
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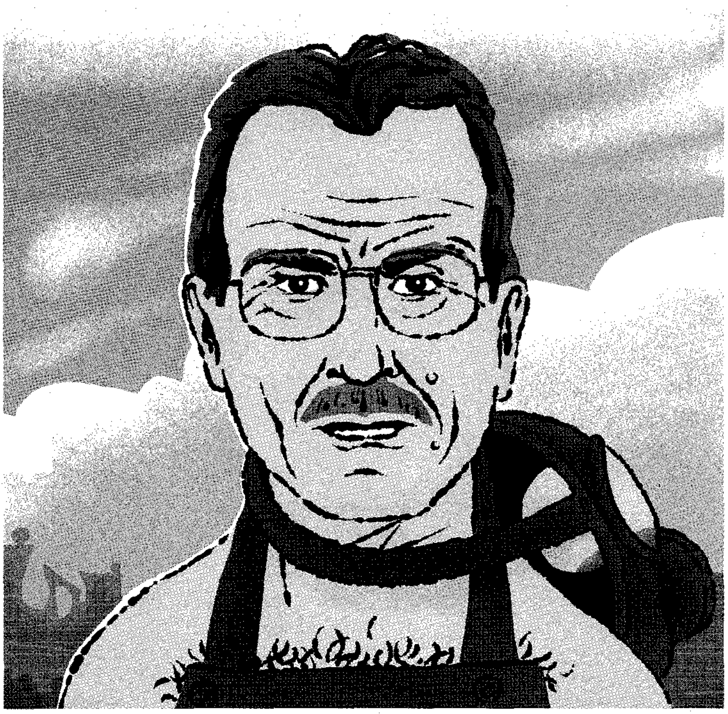
ON TELEVISION

BAD CHEMISTRY

More mad men on AMC.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

"Breaking Bad," a new drama on AMC, was created by Vince Gilligan, who was a writer and producer of "The X-Files" for most of its life, and the two series are like night and day. The work of Mulder and Scully, the two F.B.I. agents who investigated the paranormal in "The X-Files," seemed always to take place in the cool eeriness of nighttime, and was about darkness—the unseen and the unexplainable—and the possibility that "the truth is out there." "Breaking Bad" isn't about possibility—in this series, the truth is right here, and it's ugly, and it's made uglier by the harsh daytime light of Albuquerque, where the show takes place. Though we are often in a suburban setting, in ordinary middle-class houses, some of the action does occur in the desert, and over all there is a bleached-out look, a glare, to the show; you feel you should be watching it through Ray-Bans, to keep out the desert dust and the unforgiving light. Really, it is we who should not forgive the light, for the way it makes the world look.



Desert Sturm: Bryan Cranston as the troubled hero of "Breaking Bad."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

In "Breaking Bad," the main character, Walter White (Bryan Cranston), having just turned fifty, finds out that he has inoperable lung cancer. It's shocking (he has never smoked) but somehow fitting, since the show's environment is a kind of dead zone, not fit for any form of life more tender than spiders, snakes, or scorpions. This piece of bad news—in Walt's words, "Best-case scenario, with chemo, I'll live maybe another couple of years"—comes in the very first episode, before we really find out who Walt is or before we care much about him. He's a high-school chemistry teacher who apparently was destined for bigger things: a wall plaque in his house says he contributed to research that was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1985. Now he can't even inspire his own students. Walt is almost the dramatic correlative of the hapless sitcom dad Cranston played in "Malcolm in the Middle." He's pale and unsmiling, he can't read his students, he has an unbecoming mustache, and all his clothes are in the bilious family, ranging from yellowish green to greenish yellow. Financially, his life is less than fulfilling as well—he supplements his income with an after-school job at a car wash, though in the show he holds that job only as long as he needs to for viewers to get how abject and humiliated and frustrated he is. He even has to wash the car of a jerky student who disrupts his class and then takes a picture of him squatting and soaping the tires. The sense of suffocation extends to his personal life, too. For his birthday breakfast, his wife, Skyler (Anna Gunn, who played Sheriff Seth Bullock's wife in "Deadwood"), serves him a plate of bacon and eggs; not only has she arranged the slices to look like the number 50 but she's also substituted "veggie bacon" for the real thing. They have a teen-age son, Walt, Jr., who has cerebral palsy (as does the actor who portrays him, RJ Mitte); that condition isn't seen specifically as a weight on Walt—it's just a given. But there is an evident paltriness to his home life; something's missing, or out of whack, and even though Skyler is pregnant, you don't feel that this is a family with a future, because it doesn't seem to have much of a present. One night in bed, Skyler is sitting up, working at her laptop computer, waiting to see how an eBay auction ends; at the same time, with a free hand, she distractedly attempts to boot Walt's hard drive. A fine romance this is not.

The last thread holding Walt to his own life is cut when he finds out he has cancer and decides not to tell his family; at that point, the disconnect is complete, and Walt goes from being desperate to being a desperado. (The show's title is slang for what happens when someone's actions take surprisingly uncharacteristic, often law-breaking turns. If St. Francis of Assisi had held up a liquor store, for example, we would, if I'm not mistaken, say, "Man, the dude really broke bad when he hit that joint.") Gilligan, who wrote the first four episodes—and is the executive producer, along with Mark Johnson, whose producing credits go all the way back to "Diner," in 1982—has done some clever plotting in order to make Walt cross the line in a credible way. Or, at least, a TV-credible way. Walt's interest is piqued when his brother-in-law, Hank (Dean Norris), a D.E.A. agent, talks of the huge sum of money found at a meth-house bust, and he asks to ride along with him someday on a bust; the day he accompanies Hank, Walt has the good, and bad, luck to see a former student of his, a slacker named Jesse (Aaron Paul), running away from the crime scene. He tracks him down and makes a deal: he won't turn him in if Jesse becomes his partner in crime.

There are, it is impossible not to point out, similarities to the Showtime series "Weeds," a suburb-spoofing comedy starring Mary-Louise Parker as a pot-dealing entrepreneur; as with Walt, her turn toward the illegal was driven by an extreme, untimely occurrence—her husband died of a heart attack, and she needed money. (There is also an unmistakable whiff of "American Beauty." Asked by Jesse why he has descended into drug dealing, Walt replies, "I am awake.") But the two shows have very different tones and different preoccupations. "Weeds" has more to say about America than it does about life-and-death matters; in "Breaking Bad," comedy and horror have more to do with the problem of being alive, knowing that you're going to die, and figuring out how to manage your soul's business in the meantime. (A salient everyday element of the show, however, is the fact that Walt's teacher's salary has not enabled him to insure his family's welfare after he's gone.) But Walt's plan isn't just desperate; it's also possibly the worst idea anyone has ever had, and things go entirely off the rails. He and Jesse quickly get themselves into serious trouble—trouble on a Lady Macbeth scale. Out in the middle of the desert, inside an R.V., Walt is cooking meth—and, because he's a responsible grownup, looking ridiculous doing it. He's stripped down to his underpants, so that his clothes won't smell when he goes home, and he's wearing a green lab apron. Suddenly, there's a brief, violent cascade of errors and misjudgments. Walt's quick thinking, and his knowledge of chemistry, saves his and Jesse's lives but causes the death of one man and the near-death of another, leaving Walt and Jesse in moral agony: they can't bring themselves to kill the man near death, and they can't let him go. They've also got a body to dispose of—and anyone who sees how they do it won't forget it anytime soon. It's a chemistry experiment gone wrong in a novel and nauseating way.

And things just keep going downhill. Jesse and Walt can't quite cover their tracks, and neither, separately, has the skills necessary to pull off this subterfuge. Walt actually makes a list, on lined paper, of the pros and cons of killing the man they didn't finish off. His resolve shifts after each little interaction with the man, whom they're keeping in Jesse's basement. One of the interesting oddities of "Breaking Bad" is that it doesn't rush to explain itself. Characters are not always what they seem surely to be: Jesse's background is not what you would infer from the way he lives; Skyler's sister, Marie (Betsy Brandt), who's married to Hank, the D.E.A. agent, doesn't hesitate to report, erroneously, to her husband that her nephew is smoking pot, and she also doesn't hesitate to steal a pair of shoes from a shoe store. And Hank, a stereotypical swaggering enforcement officer—slightly charming, very boorish—indeed remains that but also turns out to be more as well. (Norris, drawing on aspects of Bruce Willis and Michael Chiklis characters, is by far the most fun actor to watch and listen to in the show.)

But "Breaking Bad" is at times weighed down by its ideas, and by the metaphor of chemistry for getting at life's existential conundrums. Walt talks to his students about chiral molecules—molecules that are mirror images of each other but behave in different ways. On the day of his fiftieth birthday, he tells his class that life is an endless cycle of solution and dissolution, "over and over and over." These are his preoccupations, but they don't quite become ours. I don't feel won over by the show. It's more than two-dimensional, and yet somehow less than three. Eighteen years ago, "Twin Peaks" gave us the thrill of artfulness, black humor, weirdness, and mystery combined with the letdown of meta-shaggy storytelling and notional characters. A wide range of shows in the post-"Twin Peaks" television landscape have occupied the same inorganic, two-and-half-dimensional world. "Breaking Bad" is very well done, but it has a bleakness that seems to be manufactured for no good reason. In its spiral down toward nothingness, "Breaking Bad" pulls viewers down with it, just because it can. ♦

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

From the Eugene (Ore.) Register-Guard.

An item about a Thursday event at Diablo's featuring four women DJs on Page 8 of Friday's edition incorrectly identified DJ KaatScratch as transgendered. She describes herself musically as "transgenred."

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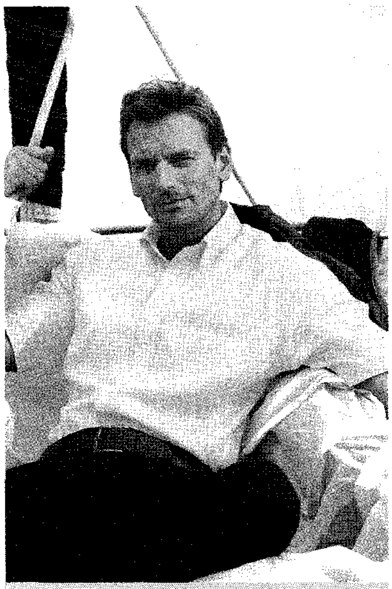

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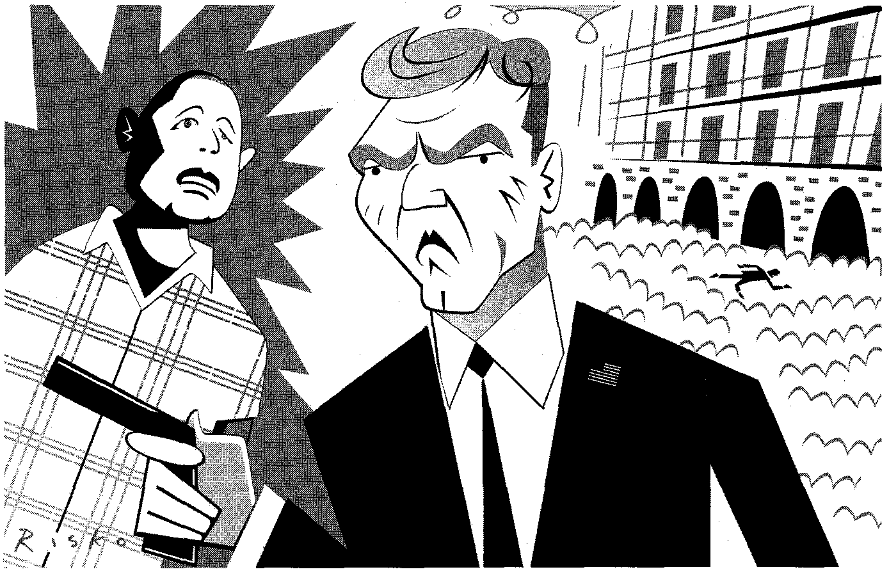
THE CURRENT CINEMA

TAKING ACTION

"Vantage Point," "The Counterfeiters," and "Definitely, Maybe."

BY DAVID DENBY

One of the things that moviemakers dream of is the excitement of capturing the sheer flux of life, the interaction of many motions, large and small—say, a mass of people surging forward (in war, revolution, or just getting to work), and, within that mass, the movements of a few individuals (lovers, murderers, executives late for an appointment). So here's a complex sequence of events, featuring as much flux as any director could desire: the President of the United States is giving a speech in a public square in Salamanca, Spain; an assassin plugs him from a window across the square; a bomb goes off underneath the speaker's platform; men and women, all with some mysterious intent of their own, barrel through the general confusion, while panicked people by the hundreds stream into the surrounding streets, among them terrorists and American Secret Service agents racing after them. Now, considered merely as story material, "Vantage Point"—a new thriller that records all this—is sub-Tom Clancy stuff. The terrorist plot at the center of the movie is not even marginally plausible; the characters are stick figures—either loyal and brave defenders of the President or swinish, swarthy bad guys. Considered as a piece of story*telling*, however, "Vantage Point" is something remarkable—the ultimate case, perhaps, of a movie as a big whirling machine. The writer, Barry L. Levy, and the director, Pete Travis, a Brit who made a TV movie about a bombing in Northern Ireland, may be taking their cues from genre fiction, but no one can say that they haven't beautifully mapped out their turf as a grid of charged vectors.



Forest Whitaker and Dennis Quaid in a thriller shown from several points of view.

ROBERT RISKO

To get everything in, the filmmakers use a theme-and-variations structure. We see the events, from beginning to end, six times, first from the point of view of a TV-news crew reporting the speech, and then through the eyes of a Secret Service agent (Dennis Quaid), a tourist who gets mixed up in the mess (Forest Whitaker), the President (William Hurt), two of the terrorists (Saïd Taghmaoui and Edgar Ramirez), and so on. The movie is intended as an homage to Kurosawa's "Rashomon," but, really, it's quite different. In "Rashomon," the varying accounts of a rape and murder are shaped by self-interest. "Vantage Point" is more literal; it shows what each person actually sees, not what he wants to see. In each depiction, we get a little closer to comprehension of the entire affair only to have the filmmakers—in a rather cheap trick—cut away to still another character's restricted view of things. Finally, they abandon the vantage-point experiment, shift to an impersonal view, and finish the story in a conventional way. Like so many other thrillers, this one ends in a series of car crashes and shootouts.

Is it art? Not remotely. But, up to the final scenes, it's a tremendous piece of engineering. After all, the narratives have to synch up visually, which can't be easy to manage. And the hurtling force of "Vantage Point" is fun to watch. But something more than excitement is at stake. Like mystics or ancient philosophers, we long to perceive the secret and idiosyncratic pattern within chaos, the singular currents running through the tumultuous sea. We are denied this in life, since we can never recall everything in an event happening around us, no matter how many times we replay it in our heads. Levy and Travis, though, have pulled this off. They inject some small human touches into the action—Dennis Quaid's frowning determination, Forest Whitaker's natural empathy, William Hurt's self-amusement mixed with gravity—but all that feels like decoration. The soul of this new machine is the machine itself.

Who is the greater hero: the morally intransigent man who refuses all compromise with evil, or the trimmer who partly collaborates with an oppressor in the hope of keeping himself and others alive? These are hardly the freshest questions in the world, but "The Counterfeiters," which was written and directed by Stefan Ruzowitzky—whose Austrian grandparents were Nazi sympathizers—makes the old quandaries vibrantly new. This sombre-looking but emotionally commanding movie (the Austrian nominee for the best foreign-language-film Oscar), celebrates two real-life figures of very different temperament. The central character is based on Salomon Smolianoff—known in the movie as Salomon Sorowitsch, or Sally (Karl Markovics)—the most talented counterfeiter in prewar Berlin, and also a bon vivant, ladies' man, cynic, and opportunist; in brief, a happy criminal. In the film, Sally, a Russian-born Jew, is arrested in 1936 and later sent to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, where he survives for five years by painting Nazi kitsch—portraits of S.S. families and the like. In 1944, he's transferred to another camp, Sachsenhausen, near Berlin, and placed at the head of Operation Bernhard—a counterfeiting workshop run by the S.S. and staffed by Jewish prisoners skilled as printers and graphic artists. The Nazi plan is to produce enormous amounts of authentic-looking British and American currency, dump it on the market, and undermine the economies of those countries. Sally's unit produces the British pound in bulk, but his perfect design for the dollar is sabotaged by a Communist printer in the group, Adolf Burger (August Diehl), a fiery anti-Nazi who can't bring himself to help the German war effort. In Sally's eyes, Burger's morality is impeccable, but the noble printer could get them all killed. "The Counterfeiters" is devoted to Sally's gift for survival—his way of using his wits to keep the group together and to prevent Burger from attaining the martyrdom he appears to long for. The movie is based on a book by Burger, who, more than sixty years later, is still alive. But there's little doubt who the true hero of the story is.

Shooting the film at the rebuilt Babelsberg studio, just outside Berlin, Ruzowitzky re-created the forgers' special quarters in Sachsenhausen—a privileged playpen where the inmates are fed and housed decently and given a Ping-Pong table for "pleasure." The director assumes that we don't need to see what else went on in the camp. Perhaps thirty thousand people died there, and sounds of the camp's normal activities eerily break through the walls of the forgers' compound. In all, the situation of the counterfeiters is similar to that of the British prisoners building a bridge for the Japanese in "The Bridge on the River Kwai." They get to practice their craft, which keeps their morale up and even provides them with a little joy. Yet some of them are also sick with shame—the clothes they are given to wear by the S.S. have been taken from the dead. Ruzowitzky's cinematographer, Benedict Neuenfels, shot the movie largely with a handheld camera, and always from the point of view of the forgers, who live and flourish only at the sufferance of the S.S. An officer named Herzog (Devid Striesow), a Nazi of ambiguous intentions—he's a protector and a potential executioner—treats Sally as both a genius and a worm, and Sally, silent, furtive, and willing to accept humiliation, plays at servility. As the movie tells it, it's precisely Sally's faking and his criminal abilities that work for him in the camp. Karl Markovics has a narrow hatchet face—aggressive but guarded—and a glint in his eye. The movie keeps us close to him, and we learn, with increasing admiration, how his mind works. "The Counterfeiters" is a testament to guile. Ruzowitzky scored the picture with tangos, and the tangos are meant to be Sally's music—seductive, insolent, triumphant.

Ryan Reynolds, the mild-eyed TV actor, is perhaps too recessive for starring roles in the movies. In the new romantic comedy "Definitely, Maybe," he plays a young man who can't decide which of three women he wants. His character, Will Hayes, is meant to be a little lost, but the performance itself is tentative and physically inert; it's as if Reynolds thought that any display of sexual swagger would turn Will into a cad—a misconception that almost any old movie star could have argued him out of. Yet "Definitely, Maybe," which was written and directed by Adam Brooks, has charm and spirit. The movie is set in Manhattan during Bill Clinton's first Presidential campaign and the years afterward, a period in which Will's ambitions and romantic mishaps are plotted against the President's troubles with women and the disillusion that overtook the later Clinton period. At the request of his smart little daughter, Maya (Abigail Breslin), Will recounts his love life, though he changes the names, so that Maya can't tell which of his three girlfriends will turn out to be her mother. For us, the best part of the tale is not finding out which woman he marries; the interest lies in the women themselves. Elizabeth Banks, a slender, cheerful blonde, plays a Midwesterner with a sense of honor so highly developed that she argues herself out of happiness; Isla Fisher, short, with thick auburn hair, is a changeable free spirit who keeps Will—and maybe herself—off balance; and Rachel Weisz, in her strongest movie work to date, is shrewd, flirtatious, and stunningly untrustworthy as an ambitious journalist. In serious roles, Weisz can be stiff-backed and righteous, but here, doing comedy, she appears to be a major actress eager to reveal everything she's been holding inside. ♦

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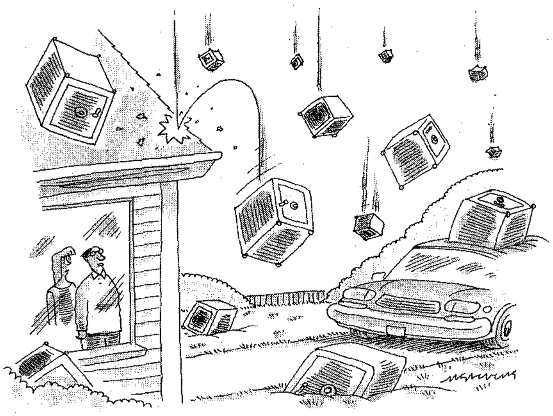
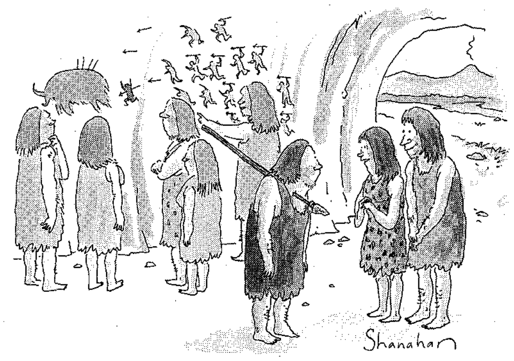
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by P. C. Vey, must be received by Sunday, March 2nd. Finalists in the February 11th & 18th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the March 17th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"And tomorrow there's a twenty-per-cent chance of anvils."
Richard Jones, Pasadena, Calif.



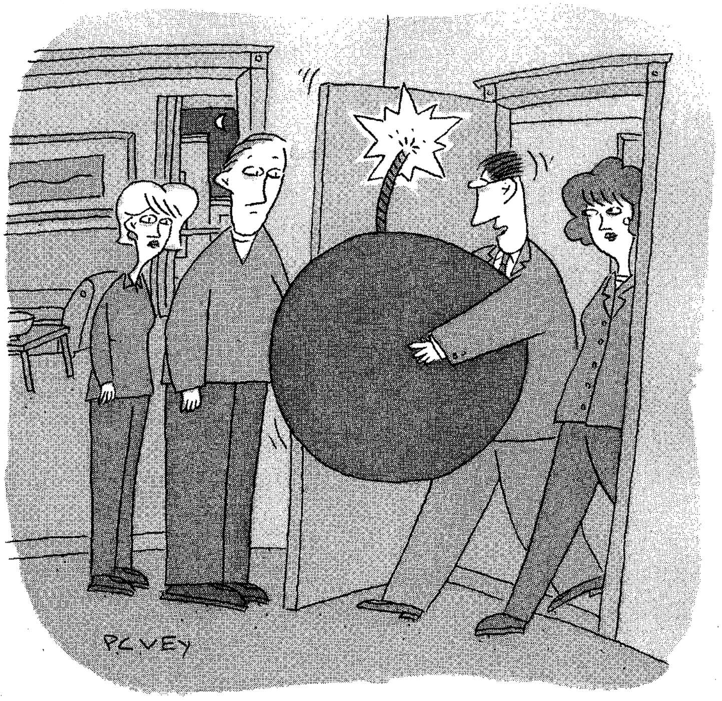
THE FINALISTS

"I almost wore the same spear."
David Schermer, Chicago, Ill.

"So how much of the story is autobiographical?"
Tim Bauer, San Francisco, Calif.

"So you're the guy who discovered friendly fire."
Mike Lingle, Dalton, Ga.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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The average woman spends *11 years out of the workforce* taking care of family.

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